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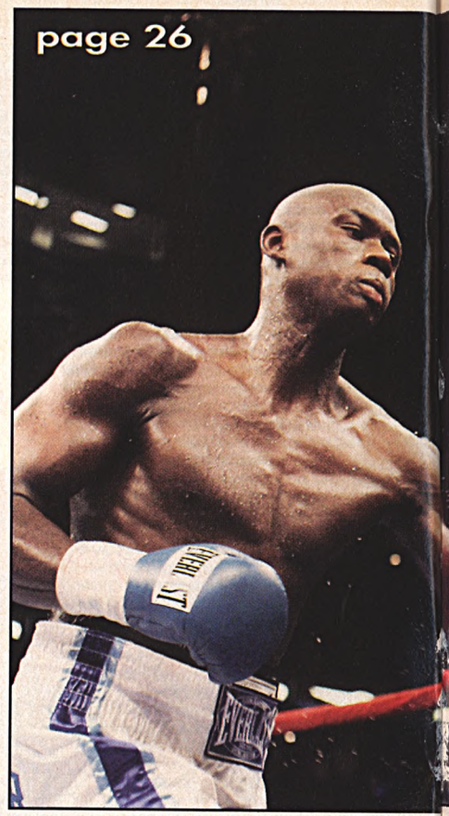

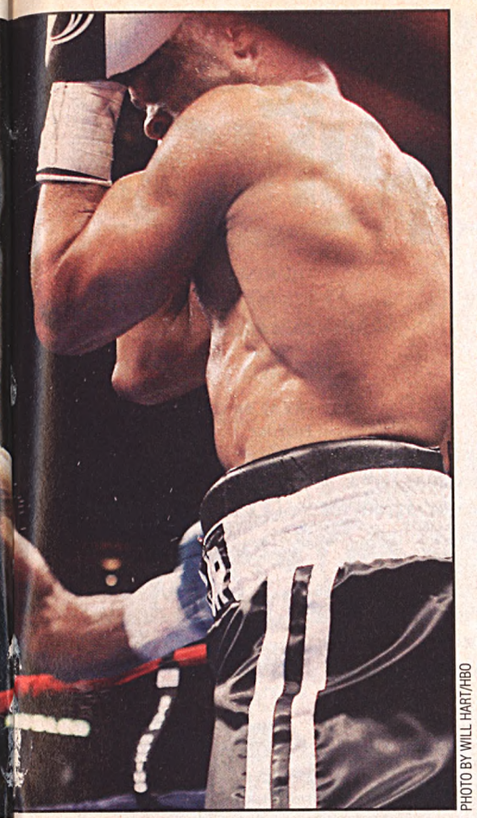

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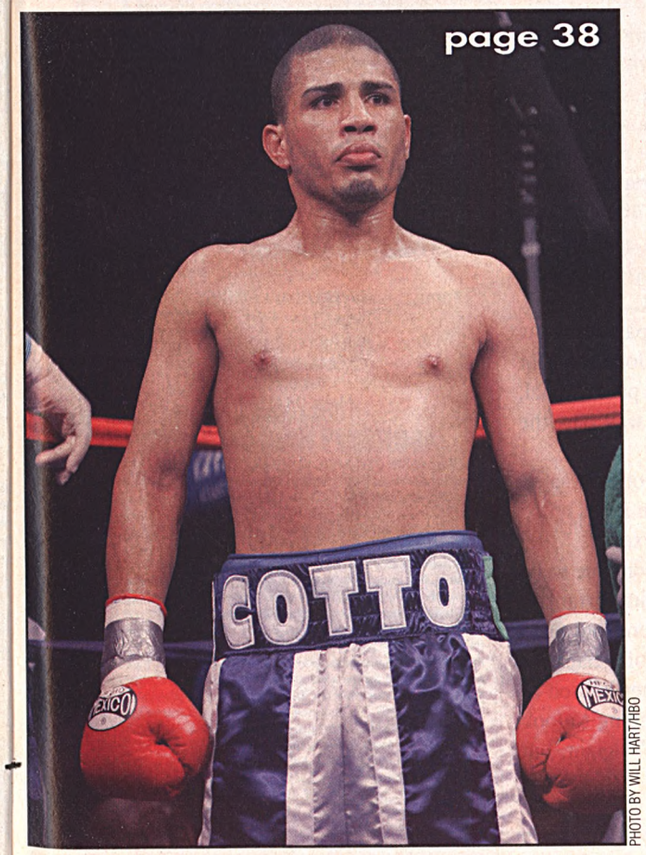

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RINGSIDE

As I write this in late-October, Floyd Mayweather was scheduled to fight Sharmba Mitchell in Portland, Oregon, on November 19. HBO was set to televise the event. Unless everybody came to their senses in the interim, it should be over by now. I could be wrong, but I'm guessing it won't be the type of fight that will make everybody forget Corrales-Castillo I.

With all due respect to Mitchell, once a good fighter but now past his peak, he is not the sort of opponent the best pound-for-pound pugilist in the world should be fighting. Not if Mayweather is truly interested in doing what he said many times: establish himself as one of the greatest fighters of all-time.

Like most people, I'm blown away by Mayweather's awesome ability. When he won THE RING Fighter of the Year Award in 1998, you had to figure he'd have garnered a few more by now. But so far it hasn't happened. True, "Pretty Boy" has beaten some first-rate fighters since '98, but his career has lacked consistency, getting bogged down by legal difficulties, layoffs, and meaningless matches.

The courtroom dramas aside, the way Mayweather is mishandling his career reminds me all-too-much of another incredible talent: Roy Jones. Like Jones, Mayweather is wasting much of his prime mired in inconsequential fights.

A big part of the problem with both Mayweather and Jones is that they've had the deepest pockets in boxing as accomplices. I can no more figure out why HBO is paying millions of dollars for Mayweather-Mitchell than I could understand why the network bought Jones versus Rick Frazier, Richard Hall, and Glen Kelly. The same goes for Mayweather's 2005 mismatch against Henry Bruseles. It's not like HBO is in a bidding war for their services.

Buying fighters (by signing them to long-term contracts), instead of buying individual fights always backfires in the long run. This is something that HBO's rival, Showtime, finally figured out, which is probably the main reason they have, by and large, been kicking HBO's butt in terms of entertaining fights recently. But the life of a TV network is much longer than that of a fighter's career, which gives the network much more time to rebound from mistakes. So if Mayweather wants to be all that he can be, it's time to stop taking the easy money and concentrate on fighting the very best, before it's too late.

It should be remembered that Jones never had impressive pay-per-view numbers before taking a risk, albeit a calculated one, and fighting John Ruiz for a heavyweight belt. Ironically, by then, Jones, in his 14th year as a professional, was already starting to slip. Now he's just an ordinary fighter way past the point of enhancing his legacy.

Mayweather, however, has several advantages over Jones. Not only is he younger, he's also a better fighter, having mastered his craft, while Jones relied almost exclusively on his once-amazing speed and unworldly reflexes.

Mayweather's finely honed technical skills will allow him to continue to be a great fighter after age begins to slow him down. Just as importantly, Mayweather seems far more interested in fighting the best opponents out there than Jones ever did. He just has to get a more realistic grasp of what he's worth. It's not going to be easy. Like a spoiled child, Mayweather is used to being coddled by HBO, and if it doesn't stop, we're eventually going to look back on his career the same way we are now looking at Jones'—great, but nowhere near as great as it should have been.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 85, No. 1 **February 2006**

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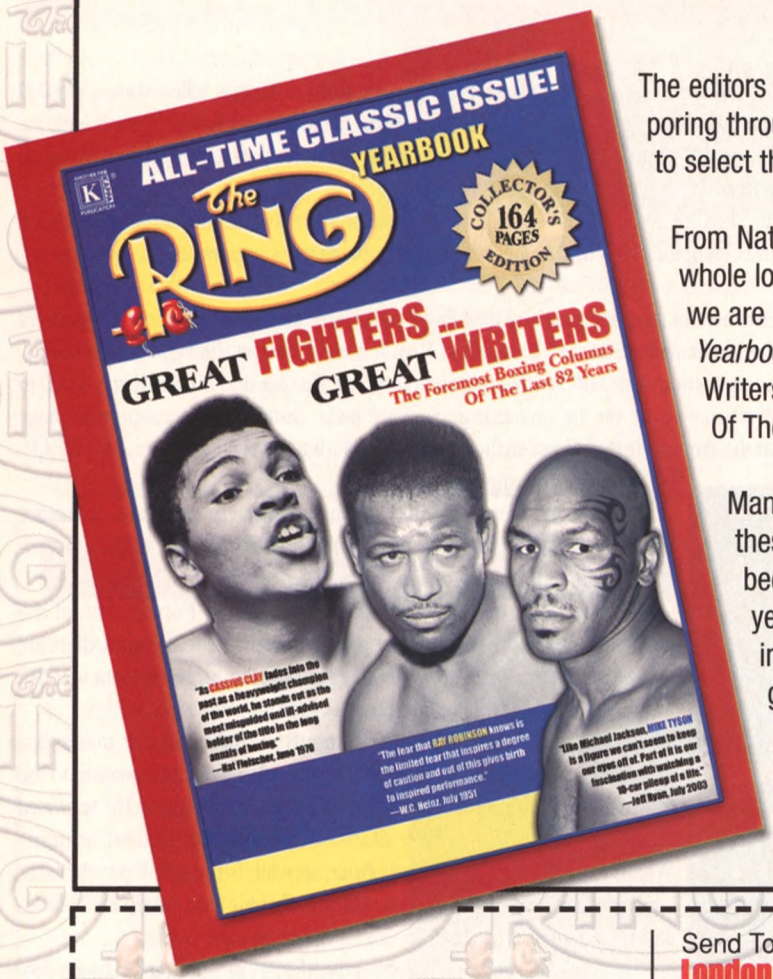

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ROUND ONE

BOXING AIDS KATRINA VICTIMS

The snipers in the mainstream media always seem to peep out of the bushes when something bad happens in boxing. But when some good occurs, those same snipers tend to turn their backs and look the other way. It was, however, virtually impossible to ignore the generosity of boxing people toward Hurricane Katrina victims.

It seemed the entire boxing community—managers, promoters, TV networks, fighters—all stepped up to help. From world champions who throw punches to the people that count punches, everyone wanted to do their part.

Perhaps the biggest show of support came on HBO Pay-Per-View's telecast of the light heavyweight title fight between world champion Antonio Tarver and Roy Jones, in Tampa, Florida, on October 1. Tarver and Jones, in conjunction with HBO PPV and promoters Star Boxing and Square Ring, opted to relinquish selling advertising space on the ring mat and corner pads. Instead, those precious signage areas were donated to the American Red Cross, which displayed the disaster relief number, 800-HELP-NOW across the ring mat.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Tarver-Jones III turnbuckle pad and canvas featured Red Cross appeal

"It gives me great honor to have the opportunity to make a difference and bring about awareness to the world of the devastation and the importance of the relief efforts needed after Hurricane Katrina," said Tarver.

Former welterweight world champion Vernon Forrest, one of the most conscientious fighters in the game today, came to the immediate aid of Katrina victims, providing temporary housing in the Atlanta area for families who lost their homes because of the storm.

Bob Canobbio, president of CompuBox, the company that keeps punch stats at ringside for HBO and ESPN, pledged a $1 donation to the American Red Cross for each of the 601 landed punches on the televised fights shown on *Boxing After Dark*'s September 24 telecast, featuring Wladimir Klitschko and Samuel Peter, as well as the 1,230 punches that connected on the Marco Antonio Barrera-Robbie Peden HBO PPV telecast the previous weekend.

The tragedy even brought forth a rare display of solidarity between promoters: Lou DiBella, a co-promoter of the September 17 Barrera-Peden card in Las Vegas, and Dino Duva, co-promoter of the September 24 HBO show with Top Rank, decided to follow Canobbio's lead. DiBella pledged a $1 donation to the American Red Cross for every punch landed during the Barrera-Peden fight, and Duva matched it for Klitschko-Peter.

Oscar De La Hoya then donated $12,300, $10 for every punch landed during the Barrera-Peden fight.

In addition, female fighter Jaime Clampitt was able to raise $1,320 toward the relief effort. Clampitt, the reigning IWBF lightweight titleholder, auctioned off the trunks she wore for an October 31 title defense against Eliza Olson on eBay for $660. She was also able to match that contribution with a pair of signed gloves. Clampitt immediately gave the money directly to the SPCA for help with animal relief from the effects of Hurricane Katrina.

—Joe Santoliquito

YO, GUESS WHO'S BACK

As reluctant as Evander Holyfield is to quit the boxing, "The Real Deals" has nothing on 59-year-old actor Sylvester Stallone, who will begin filming the sixth installment of *Rocky* in early-2006.

The latest chapter in the life of the movie industry's most successful pugilist, titled *Rocky Balboa*, seeks to recapture some of the aesthetic qualities that helped the original *Rocky* garner an Oscar as the Best Picture of 1976.

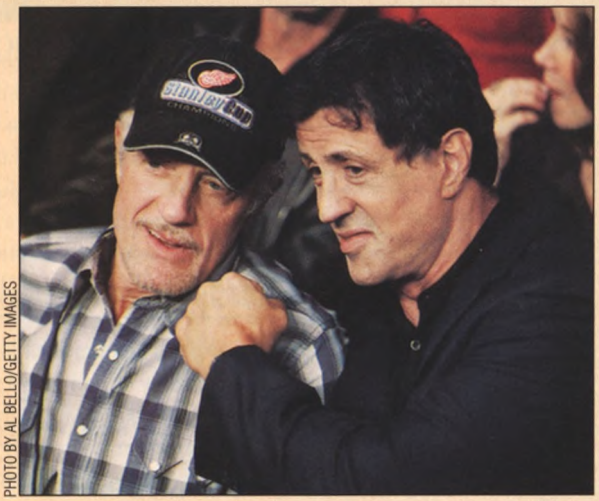


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Stallone preps for comeback by poking James Caan

"There was a reluctance to go forward until everybody felt there was a script that echoed the same kind of sincerity and values the first one had, and had some poignancy like the first one had," Stallone told *Daily Variety*.

Stallone, who wrote the script for the new movie and will both star and direct, said, "*Rocky Balboa* is about everybody who feels they want to participate in the race of life, rather than be a bystander." Translation: Rocky is going to lace 'em up yet again.

The new movie takes place many years after *Rocky V*—you remember, the one with Tommy Morrison—and the old champ is back in Philadelphia, where he started out as just another bum from the neighborhood. "This film brings Rocky's story full circle," said Hollywood heavyweight Joe Roth, who helped broker the movie.

There has been much speculation about who will play Mason "The Line" Dixon, Stallone's latest opponent. As we went to press, light heavyweight champion Antonio Tarver was the leading candidate. Tarver seems perfect for the role. Rocky's foes generally do a lot of mouthing off, and when it comes to creative trash-talking, Tarver is right up there with James Toney.

"You got any excuses tonight, Balboa?"

—Nigel Collins

JAIL FOR MOREL

"I hope this doesn't affect me in any way. Boxing already has a bad enough reputation. We didn't need this."

So proclaimed Eric Morel in 1997, after Mike Tyson bit Evander Holyfield's ear in the ring. At the time, the flyweight who represented the U.S.A. in the Olympic Games a year earlier and was en route to the WBA 112-pound title, was portrayed to be as upstanding outside the ropes as he was outstanding between them. Morel "would never disgrace the sport that has given him everything. He has too much respect for boxing, for his opponents, for himself," wrote *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* columnist Gary D'Amato, adding: "Mike Tyson could learn a lesson from the kid."

Apparently, though, it was the other way around. After the native of Puerto Rico won the WBA flyweight title from Sornpichai Kratingdaenggym on August 8, 2000, Morel had several scrapes with the law in his adopted hometown of Madison, Wisconsin. Then, in June 2004, he was charged with second-degree sexual assault of an unconscious 15-year-old girl.

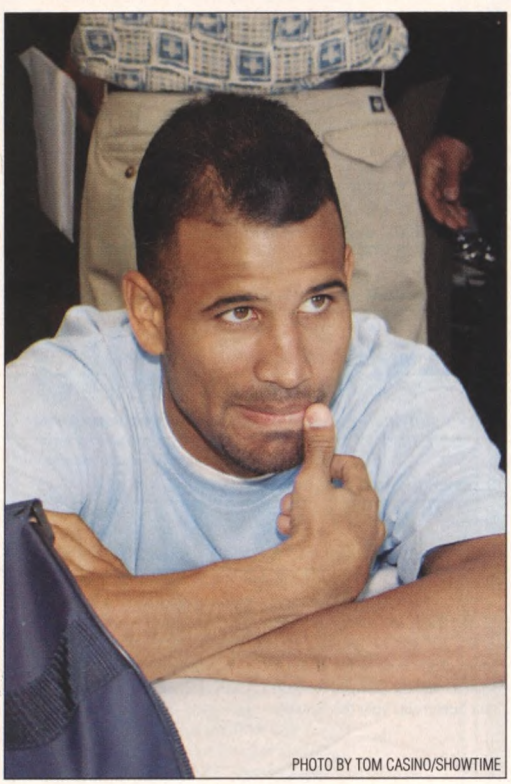


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Morel sent to slammer after sexual assault conviction

Morel—who defended the title five times before losing it to Lorenzo Parra in 2003—pleaded no-contest to the charge, and on October 11, 2005, he was sentenced to two years in prison.

"This kind of sexual contact, with a passed out 15-year-old, is too shocking and too outrageous," said Madison judge C. William Foust in passing sentence on the weeping Morel, who acknowledged "full responsibility for my participation" in the crime.

So ends, at least temporarily, the once-promising career of the 35-2 (18) boxer—and locks in, for all time, Morel's reputation as Tyson Lite.

—Pete Ehrmann

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
9/17/05	Jesus Chavez KO 11 Leavander Johnson	PPV	l	A	A-	C
Sometimes no one screws up and bad things happen anyway						
9/17/05	Shane Mosley W 10 Jose Luis Cruz	PPV	w	B-	C+	C-
If you get frustrated remembering how good Mosley used to be, imagine how he feels						
9/17/05	Marco Antonio Barrera W 12 Robbie Peden	PPV	jl	A+	B-	C+
Who else would love to see Barrera and Juan Manuel Marquez get together?						
9/24/05	Wladimir Klitschko W 12 Samuel Peter	HBO	h	A-	B+	B+
If we didn't see Peter sit down between rounds, we'd have thought he was physically incapable of bending his legs						
9/24/05	Miguel Cotto KO 7 Ricardo Torres	HBO	jw	B+	C+	A
If not for Corrales-Castillo I, this is easily the Fight of the Year						
9/30/05	Henry Bruseles KO 4 Armando Cordova	Telefutura	jw	C+	D+	C-
Hey, when a guy who's two fights over .500 gives you four good rounds before quitting, you really can't complain						
9/30/05	Glen Johnson KO 10 George Khalid Jones	FOX SN	lh	B-	C+	C+
Jones a fairly solid guy, but not at Johnson's level; now, how about a rubber match with Tarver?						
10/1/05	Chris Byrd W 12 DaVarryl Williamson	Showtime	h	B+	C-	F
Thanks, guys, for making us long for Oliver McCall-Frank Bruno						
10/1/05	James Toney W 10 Dominick Guinn	Showtime	h	B+	B-	C+
Is it possible that Toney's a better heavyweight than he was a middleweight? It's starting to look that way						
10/1/05	Andre Ward KO 1 Glenn LaPlante	PPV	m	C-	C-	C-
Why should getting hit on the back of the head hurt any more than getting hit on the front of the head? Or the side?						
10/1/05	Brian Minto KO 7 Vinny Maddalone	PPV	h	C-	A	C
Hey, ref, what are you doing? Vinny let the first 14 hooks land so he could counter the 15th; come on!						
10/1/05	Nate Campbell KO 10 Almazbak Raiymkulov	PPV	l	B-	A	B
Raiymkulov deserved to get knocked out for allowing that silly "Dr. Evil" crap; how revolting						
10/1/05	**Antonio Tarver W 12 Roy Jones**	**PPV**	**world lh**	**A**	**A**	**C+**
Well, for all of you who wanted to see Roy Jones humbled, there you have it						
10/7/05	Kelly Pavlik KO 9 Fulgencio Zuniga	Telefutura	m	C+	A-	B-
Pavlik didn't have to make this one hard, but he did and it was a good fight as a result						
10/8/05	Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 5 Jeremy Stiers	PPV	jw	C	C-	C+
If you think the kid looks good now, wait until he hits puberty						
10/8/05	Jorge Arce KO 2 Hussein Hussein	PPV	fl	A-	A	C+
Doesn't Hussein look like Max Kellerman, only taller?						
10/8/05	Bobby Pacquiao W 12 Carlos Hernandez	PPV	jl	B+	B-	C
Come on now, you know the rules: There must be at least one horrendous decision per over-priced pay-per-view card						
10/8/05	Jose Luis Castillo KO 4 Diego Corrales	PPV	jw	A	A+	B-
If this is how Castillo looks when he comes in three pounds over, what the hell is he doing still trying to fight at lightweight?						
10/13/05	Kassim Ouma KO 4 Freddie Cuevas	HBO-L	jm	B-	C-	C+
Ouma back to his old self again, and remember, Cuevas took Jermain Taylor the distance						
10/13/05	Demetrius Hopkins KO 9 Ernesto Zepeda	HBO-L	jw	C+	C	C
Second stoppage win in a row for Hopkins, who's starting to look like a complete fighter in there						
10/15/05	Alfonso Gomez KO 4 Luciano Perez	ESPN	jw	C	C+	C
Either Gomez can't hit or Perez has an anvil surgically implanted in his jaw						
10/15/05	Jesse Brinkley W 5 Anthony Bonsante	ESPN	m	C-	B-	C
No postfight sob-fests? No wife barking from ringside? What kind of boxing show is this?						
10/15/05	Sergio Mora W 8 Peter Manfredo Jr	ESPN	m	C-	B+	B-
We thought Manfredo won this one, but what the hell, let's see them do it again; they match up well						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

BOXING BOOKSHELF

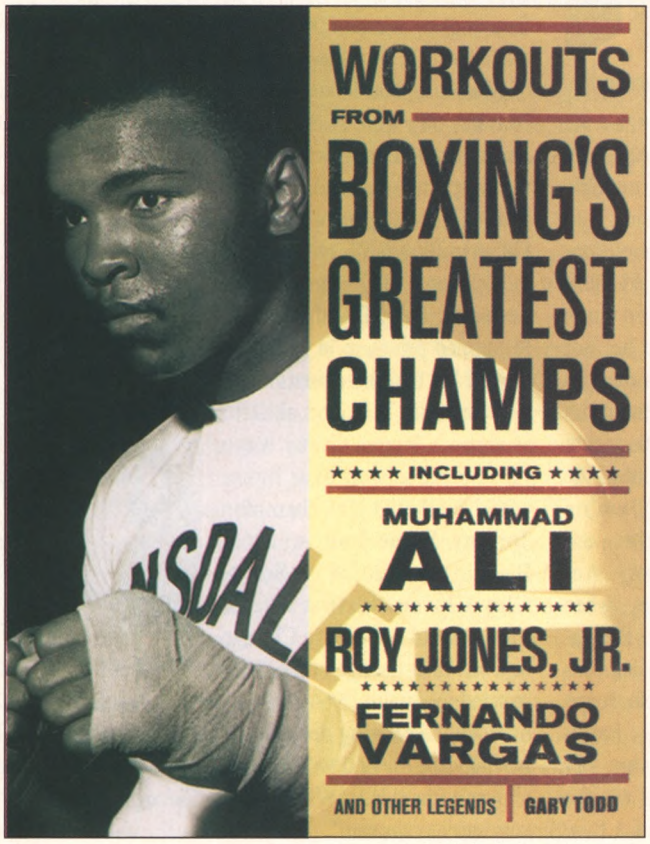
Did you ever wonder how far Muhammad Ali ran when he was getting ready for a big fight or what Roy Jones eats for breakfast? Maybe you yearn to know what time Ricky Hatton goes to bed or how many sit-ups Ken Norton did in order to keep his six-pack rippling. All this and more can be gleaned from *Workouts From Boxing's Greatest Champs* by Gary Todd (Ulysses Press, $14.95, 144 pages, paperback).

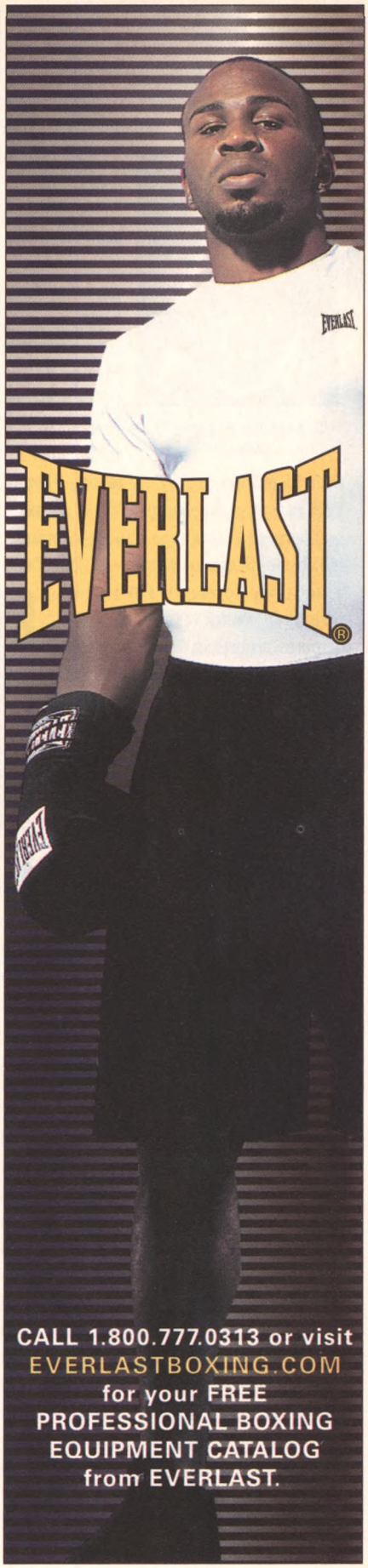
Todd joined a boxing gym to avoid getting caught up in gang warfare when he was growing up in Dundee, Scotland, and soon became what he terms a "boxaholic." Today, he lives in Australia, where he trains kids and works an occasional corner. During his travels over the years, Todd got to know many famous boxers and has picked their brains for details of their training regimes.

It's a very simple concept, but works well as a bridge intended to get boxing fans off their butts and into the gym, where, hopefully, they will put what they've read to practical use. Besides the basic information (and there's quite a bit of repetition, as most boxers do essentially the same things), there are interesting tidbits mixed in among with the more matter-of-fact information. For instance, did you know that former WBC light heavyweight titleholder Jeff Harding loves the blues and enjoyed playing his guitar after a hard day at training camp? Or that Hall of Famer Mike McCallum's idea of relaxing between workouts was driving his Harley-Davidson through the streets of Las Vegas?

Heavily illustrated with black-and-white photographs, *Workouts* is not the deepest boxing book you'll ever read, but it's a fun introduction to boxing training, and not just for those at a championship level. There's also a detailed three-level program—beginner, intermediate, advanced—designed to fit anybody able-bodied enough to make it to the gym.

—Nigel Collins



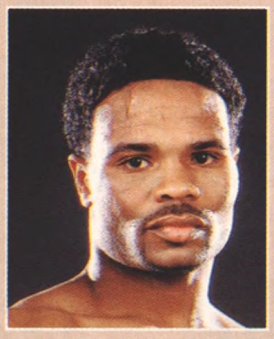


OUTSIDE THE ROPES

Oscar De La Hoya was the only boxer to make *Forbes*' list of the top 100 celebrities in 2005. At number 51, De La Hoya was sandwiched between comedian **Adam Sandler** (50) and actress **Lindsay Lohan** (52). The rankings, which were topped by **Oprah Winfrey**, were based on Web, news, and TV/radio popularity, as well as money earned. It was in the latter category that "The Golden Boy" scored the highest, coming in 18th with $38-million earned in '05 ... Heavyweight **Hasim Rahman** is clearly no De La Hoya when it comes to managing his money. In October, "The Rock" filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, citing more than $5-million in debt ... **Henry Foster**, the manager of former light heavyweight champion **Glen Johnson**, was arrested in Miami on charges of insurance fraud. According to state officials, Foster bilked an insurance company of $93,000 in disability payments ...

De La Hoya: Boxing's top celebrity

Three-time former WBA middleweight titleholder **William Joppy** disputes reports in *The Washington Post* concerning a September 8 incident that resulted in the boxer being charged with first-degree assault. *The Post*, quoting a news release issued by the Prince George's County (Maryland) Police Department, reported that Joppy approached an individual (reportedly middleweight prospect **Henry Buchanan**) at a traffic intersection, and when an argument ensued, Joppy reached inside the other person's vehicle and began to choke him. Joppy then allegedly got in his own vehicle and cased the other car, hitting it multiple times and causing it to spin out of control. Joppy, however, told fightnew.com writer **Gary Williams** that he, not Buchanan, was the victim and that Buchanan struck him in the mouth in the parking lot of the Round One Gym in Capitol Heights and then drove away. According to Joppy, when he gave chase, Buchanan sped up, losing control of his vehicle. Joppy and his attorney, **Sander M. Davidson**, say that the incident was the latest chapter of a two-year situation involving the two boxers that began in 2003 when Joppy was charged with assaulting repro man **James Ware**. In January 2004, Joppy, who says that it was actually Buchanan who hit Ware, was acquitted of all criminal charges in that case ...



Joppy: Claims innocence

Several boxers are recovering from potentially fatal head injuries: According to Chicago boxing writer **Juan C. Ayllon**, heavyweight **Giuseppe "Drew" Kidd**, who collapsed during a sparring session, is "doing better, is in physical therapy, walking and working on his speech and memory. At some point, he will have to have another operation to replace the portion of his skull they removed. The doctors are confident that have a full recovery." Indonesian super bantamweight **Antonius Rahayan**, who fell into a coma after being TKO'd by a boxer know as **Saiman** in Jakarta on September 22, regained consciousness following brain surgery and was released from hospital in October. Filipino featherweight **Ayon Naranjo** is back home following a brush with death in Yokahama, Japan, where he suffered a brain injury in a six-round decision loss to **Jorge Linares**. Naranjo was fortunate that a hospital was located just five minutes drive from the arena, which led to rapid, life-saving medical care ... Reacting to the recent ring deaths, including that of former IBF lightweight titleholder **Leavander Johnson**, the Catholic magazine *Civilta Cattolica* has condemned boxing as "a bloody and mortal game of gladiators" that "goes against the natural moral and divine principle of not killing." The magazine also deplores the public's fascination with a boxer's suffering "as merciless and inhumane" ... Former South African junior flyweight champion **Mzukisi Sikali**, 34, was shot to death, apparently by robbers, at his home in Uitenhage. Sikali, 29-7-2 (17), turned pro in May 1990 and had his final bout on March 2005, when he was stopped by IBF flyweight titleholder **Vic Darchinyan** in Australia ... We also have the deaths of two Australian boxing figures to report: Longtime official **Don Marks**, 68, died in September. Marks was chairman of the Australian National Boxing Federation Ratings Committee and a well-respected fight judge ... Former Australian junior lightweight and lightweight champion **Gilberto Biondi**, 71, passed away in Melbourne in October. Born in Terracina, Italy, Biondi, 23-13-4 (6), turned pro there in 1962, but moved his base of operations to Australia in '63. The skillful southpaw's biggest victory was a 12-round decision over future world featherweight champion **Johnny Famechon** in 1965. Biondi retired in '74 ... **Sonjai Clay-Glover**, the first wife of **Muhammad Ali**, died in Chicago in October at the age of 59. They married in August 1964, but divorced in January '66 amid conflict over Ali's increasing devotion to the Nation of Islam. "She was an independent-minded woman and she wanted to be herself," Clay-Glover's friend H.D. White told the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "She was a very spirited woman."

Sonji Clay-Glover: Dead at 59

THE PUNCHLINES

"Sergio, will you come over and give me a kiss? I like to be kissed while I'm being f__ed."

—Peter Manfredo Jr. to Sergio Mora, who had just been the beneficiary of a controversial decision over Manfredo in their October 15 rematch.

"Me and cortisone get along real well. We won two championships together."

—Vernon Forrest, commenting on the injections that eventually caused the joints of his left arm to deteriorate and led to elbow and shoulder surgery.

"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

For weekly updated RING ratings, go to www.thering-online.com

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. FLOYD MAYWEATHER
   Junior Welterweight
2. WINKY WRIGHT
   Middleweight
3. MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
   Junior Lightweight
4. MANNY PACQUIAO
   Junior Lightweight
5. JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
   Featherweight
6. ERIK MORALES
   Junior Lightweight
7. RICKY HATTON
   Junior Welterweight
8. JOSE LUIS CASTILLO
   Junior Welterweight
9. JERMAIN TAYLOR
   Middleweight
10. BERNARD HOPKINS
    Middleweight

(For period ended October 19, 2005)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Wladimir Klitschko moves to number eight, switching places with Samuel Peter, who drops to nine based on Klitschko's 12-round decision over Peter.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Tomasz Adamak advances from seventh to sixth, thanks to his sixth-round stoppage of Thomas Ulrich, previously rated ninth. Adamek's ascent pushes Julio Gonzalez down from sixth to seventh. Hugo Garay debuts at nine, replacing Ulrich.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Winky Wright has relinquished THE RING junior middleweight world championship to campaign exclusively at middleweight, where he is rated second. Travis Simms (seventh last issue) exits due to inactivity, enabling everyone rated below seven last issue to move up one spot each. The movement creates an opening for Sergio Martinez to debut at 10. Daniel Santos, currently rated third, is in danger of being expelled from the rankings because of inactivity. However, Santos maintains his current position due to the fact that a number of scheduled fights were cancelled due to no fault of his.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Jose Luis Castillo arrives in what is already one of the most competitive weight classes, entering the ratings at number five. Castillo makes the jump on the legs of his fourth-round knockout of lightweight world champion Diego Corrales in a fight that was originally supposed to be for the world title, but was switched to a non-title bout when Castillo was unable to make the 135-pound lightweight limit. Castillo's inclusion drops everyone previously rated fifth and below down a notch, forcing Junior Witter to fall from fifth to sixth, Arturo Gatto from sixth to seventh, Vivian Harris from seventh to eighth, DeMarcus Corley from eighth to ninth, and Lovemore Ndou from ninth to 10th. Souleymane M'Baye (10th last issue) exits due to the realignment.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Corrales retains the title because his loss to Castillo was over the lightweight limit. Castillo (first last issue) moves up to junior welter, which elevates Joel Casamayor (second last issue) to the top spot. Castillo's departure enables everyone rated from second to sixth to move up one place. Almazbek Raiymkulov (seventh last issue) exits after his TKO loss to unranked Nate Campbell. Jesus Chavez replaces Raiymkulov at seven, moving up from junior lightweight to lightweight. The reshuffling enables Isaac Hlatshwayo to leap from 10th to eighth, drops Ricky Quiles from ninth to 10th, and opens a slot for Lakva Sim at nine.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: The departure of Chavez (fourth last issue) permits everyone rated from fourth to eighth to move up one place. Alex Arthur (10th last issue) jumps to eighth, and Janos Nagy debuts at 10.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Chris Jones (eighth last issue) and Manuel Medina (seventh last issue) switch places due the Jones' greater activity against better opposition.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Mark Johnson (10th last issue) departs due to inactivity, making way for Mbwana Matumla to debut at 10.

FLYWEIGHTS: Jorge Arce moves up from fifth to fourth, trading places with Irene Pacheco, who drops to fifth. Arce's advancement is due to his two-round kayo of Hussein Hussein (10th last issue), who exits. Hussein is replaced by Victor Burgos, who makes the jump from the junior flyweight class.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Burgos' departure from the number-three slot enables everyone rated below third to move up one notch each and makes room for Nabuaki Masuda to debut at 10.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Diego Corrales (eighth last issue) exits, and is replaced by his kayo conqueror, Castillo. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended October 19, 2005

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Tomasz Adamek moved to sixth at light heavyweight after vanquishing Ulrich in six rounds

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: VITALI KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 35-2 (34)

1. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 39-2-1 (20)
2. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-5-1 (28)
3. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 41-5-1 (33)
4. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-4-2 (43)
5. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-2 (29)
6. **MONTE BARRETT** Queens, NY 31-4 (17)
7. **CALVIN BROCK** Charlotte, NC 26-0 (21)
8. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 45-3 (40)
9. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 24-1 (21)
10. **JAMEEL McCLINE** Clifton, NJ 32-5-3 (20)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 34-1-1 (21)
2. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 22-2-1 (14)
3. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 29-2-1 (20)
4. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 26-2 (22)
5. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 36-2-1 (30)
6. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 38-10-1 (20)
7. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 58-6 (39)
8. **RODNEY JONES** Lafayette, LA 36-3-1 (22)
9. **ALEJANDRO GARCIA** Mexico 25-1 (24)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Argentina 34-1-1 (16)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 44-2-1 (33)
2. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 30-2-1 (18)
3. **HUMBERTO SOTO** Mexico 38-5-2 (22)
4. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 23-1 (16)
5. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 24-2-2 (14)
6. **VICTOR POLO** Colombia 36-5-3 (26)
7. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 36-0-1 (20)
8. **JOAN GUZMAN** Dominican Republic 24-0 (17)
9. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 32-1 (10)
10. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 23-0-1 (17)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 56-3-1 (36)
2. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR** France 28-2-2 (19)
3. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico 38-3 (28)
4. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 23-2 (16)
5. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGYM** Thailand 23-0 (15)
6. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 26-1 (18)
7. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG** Thailand 43-2-1 (18)
8. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 23-0 (14)
9. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 22-0-1 (5)
10. **NEDAL HUSSEIN** Australia 39-2 (25)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 34-3 (30)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 19-2 (6)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 49-2-2 (34)
4. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 65-8 (42)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 18-0 (15)
6. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 34-4 (20)
7. **CRUZ CARVAJAL** Mexico 25-13-1 (21)
8. **RICARDO VARGAS** Mexico 39-11-3 (13)
9. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 30-4 (26)
10. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 17-0 (6)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK
France 31-2 (21)

1. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 33-3-2 (26)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 18-0 (9)
3. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 44-12-2 (29)
4. **CARL THOMPSON**
England 33-6 (25)
5. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-2 (17)
6. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 25-1-1 (23)
7. **DALE BROWN**
Canada 34-4-1 (22)
8. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
9. **ALEXANDER GUROV**
Ukrain 38-4-1 (33)
10. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 33-1 (26)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 24-3 (18)

1. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 43-10-2 (29)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 22-0 (13)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-4 (38)
4. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 38-3-1 (23)
5. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
France 47-2 (31)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 30-0 (21)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 38-3 (23)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 24-2 (18)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 25-2 (13)
10. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
Chicago, IL 47-6 (30)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
Wales 39-0 (31)
2. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 36-0 (27)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 20-0 (16)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 33-2 (12)
5. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 24-3 (19)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 20-2 (19)
7. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 20-5 (18)
8. **OTIS GRANT**
Canada 37-2-1 (17)
9. **ROBIN REID**
England 38-5-1 (27)
10. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 22-0 (16)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 24-0 (17)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 46-3-1 (32)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 49-3 (25)
3. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 24-1 (11)
4. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 17-0 (15)
5. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
England 40-3 (35)
6. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-1 (13)
7. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 31-7 (12)
8. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 19-0 (13)
9. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 19-1 (8)
10. **SCOTT DANN**
England 23-2 (16)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: ZAB JUDAH
Brooklyn, NY 34-2 (25)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 32-4 (23)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 34-3 (11)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 41-4 (35)
4. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 26-1 (12)
5. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
Denmark 37-0 (27)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 25-1 (23)
7. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA**
Worcester, MA 37-4-1(24)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 36-3 (11)
9. **DAVID ESTRADA**
Chicago, IL 18-2 (9)
10. **SEBASTIAN LUJAN**
Argentina 23-2-2 (15)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 39-0 (29)

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 34-0 (23)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 25-0 (21)
3. **CARLOS MAUSSA**
Colombia 19-2 (16)
4. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
Australia 31-2 (25)
5. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 53-7-1 (47)
6. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 32-1-2 (19)
7. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 39-7 (30)
8. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 25-2-1 (17)
9. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 31-4-1 (17)
10. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 40-8-1 (26)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-3 (33)

1. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 31-3-1 (19)
2. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 34-3-1 (26)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 28-0 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 32-3 (24)
5. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 37-1 (32)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-1 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-3 (29)
8. **ISAAC HLATSHWAYO**
South Africa 22-0 (9)
9. **LAVKA SIM**
Mongolia 21-4-1 (18)
10. **RICKY QUILES**
Puerto Rico 38-6-3 (8)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 61-4 (42)
2. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-3 (34)
3. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 40-3-2 (31)
4. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 21-1-1 (10)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 44-3-1 (36)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 44-2-1 (32)
7. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-6-1 (24)
8. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 21-1 (17)
9. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
Australia 25-3 (14)
10. **JANOS NAGY**
Hungary 23-0 (14)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 29-1 (16)
2. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 31-3-1 (8)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 23-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 31-1-1 (24)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-1 (26)
6. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 28-4 (18)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 23-1 (10)
8. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
South Africa 26-3 (17)
9. **GERRY PENALOSA**
Philippines 48-5-2 (33)
10. **MBWANA MATUMLA**
Tanzania. 15-1 (9)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 58-2 (31)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 26-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 24-0 (19)
4. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 41-3-1 (31)
5. **IRENE PACHECO**
Colombia 30-1 (23)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 19-0-2 (13)
7. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
Nicaragua 34-2-2 (22)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 19-0 (7)
9. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 24-3-1 (10)
10. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 38-14-3 (22)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 20-1 (17)
2. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-2-1 (11)
3. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 21-3-1 (15)
4. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 22-2-2 (13)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 18-0 (12)
6. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 19-1 (15)
7. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-4-1 (20)
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
Colombia 35-4 (21)
9. **JUNICHIRO KANEDA**
Japan 12-2 (8)
10. **NABUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 21-3 (3)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 19-1-3 (8)
2. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 50-7-4 (22)
3. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 23-0 (5)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 14-1 (5)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 15-2 (7)
6. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-7-3 (13)
7. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 19-3-1 (16)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-2-1 (10)
9. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 35-3-1 (30)
10. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 21-0 (16)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

RIGHT TO THE POINT

Launching punches that sometimes traveled only six inches, yet could knock a rival stiffer than the string beans in an unthawed TV dinner, the great Joe Louis proved that you don't always need a big windup to have an effective delivery. The same goes for column writing. Some months, there's too much to talk about and not enough space, therefore, winding up with the equivalent of a literary bolo punch or bringing a wordy haymaker up from the floor just won't work. This is one of those months.

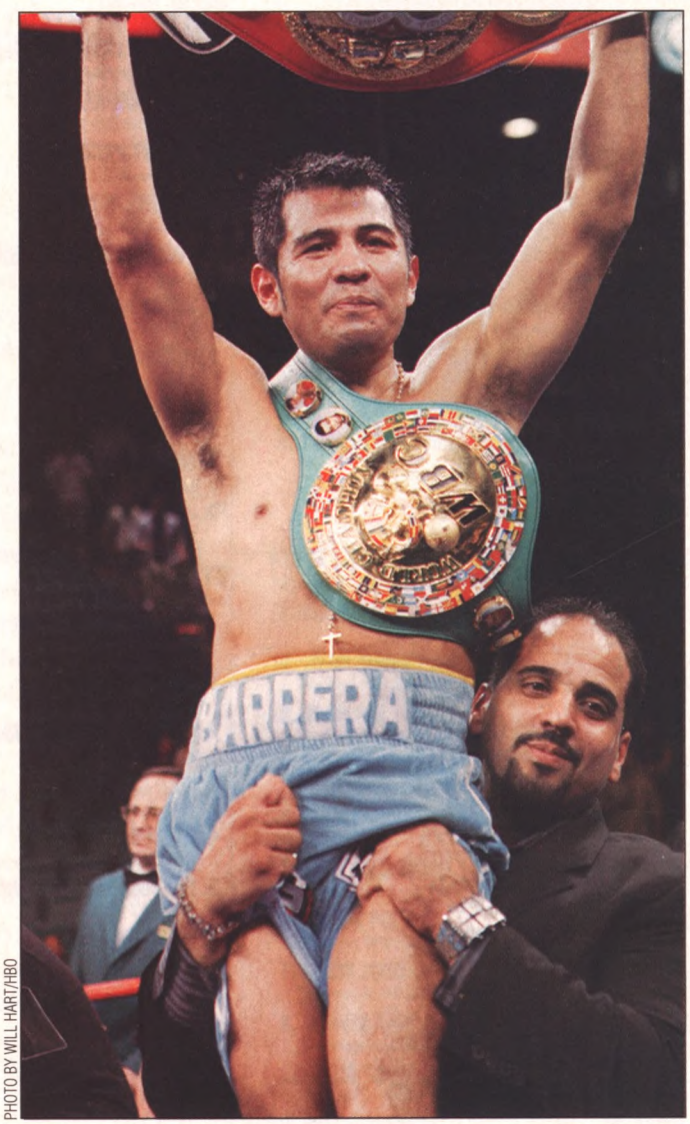


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Barrera is also doing good work outside of the ring

There's an awful lot to comment on, so in the spirit of "The Brown Bomber," allow me to keep my thoughts short and right down the pike.

News Flash: Leavander Johnson dies after kayo loss to Jesus Chavez: This is exactly why television announcers talking about the "courage" displayed by a tennis player battling leg cramps, or the "fearlessness" of an NBA point guard driving the lane through traffic, make those who follow boxing on a regular basis nauseous. The fighter enters the ring never quite sure—no matter if he's facing an all-time great or a clubfighter—if he's going to get seriously hurt or even killed. When it comes to displaying true guts, nothing compares to that walk up the ring steps. Rest in peace, fallen warrior.

News Flash: Wladimir Klitschko decisions Samuel Peter: Journalists aren't supposed to root, so you'll never get me to confess to pulling for the undefeated powerhitting Peter over the brittle-jawed, underachieving Klitschko. Oh, hell, let's be honest here. Seeing Klitschko pump some life back into his career is like learning your poison sumac has returned. The Ukrainian's game plan was nothing but jab and grab, and he even went down three times. What did Klitschko do best on the night? Uh, be taller.

It's inevitable that the thrice-kayoed Klitschko's chin is going to disintegrate again in a big fight. But why should we have to wait that long? Hey, if the Williams Sisters can play each other at Wimbledon, why can't Vitali Klitschko blast out brother Wladimir in the living room during some family gathering and end our suffering?

News Flash: Marco Antonio Barrera fights for a cause: The Mexican star insisted that part of the take from ticket sales and pay-per-view buys for his shootout with Robbie Peden be donated to help the orphans of the more than 400 women who have been murdered and mutilated by drug gangs over the past 13 years in Juarez, Mexico.

Tip your sombrero to this guy. He's a reminder that a

fighter doesn't necessarily have to peer through blood or get up from a knockdown to show how huge his heart is.

News Flash: Julio Cesar Chavez is beaten by a car dealer: No superstar's tear-jerking twilight in any other sport (Willie Mays falling down in the outfield, Joe Namath riding the bench, Bobby Orr struggling to skate on ravaged knees) is as depressing as the manner in which so many great fighters go out. Take the case of Chavez, whose career ended in September (or so he promises) when Grover Wiley, a full-time Ford salesman and part-time boxer, stopped him after five rounds.

"J.C. Superstar," future Hall of Famer and conqueror of everyone from Edwin Rosario to Meldrick Taylor, quit with an injured right hand, thus suffering the dual indignities of losing to an opponent named *Grover* and a guy who spends more time per week talking about airbags than he does hitting speedbags.

News Flash: The Garden is going from rumbles to rubble: Replace. Renovate. Replace. Renovate. Cablevision, the owner of Madison Square Garden, has vacillated for years over the future of the most famous fight venue on earth. As recently as a couple of months ago, word was that the Garden would be gutted and renovated. Now, the Garden bosses are negotiating with two developers in the hope of building a new arena a block west of the current Manhattan location.

Great, just what we need, another rectangular "state of the art" facility that looks just like the sterile, Xerox copy buildings in L.A., Chicago, Phoenix, Boston, Washington, and a dozen other places. Meanwhile, the venue that hosted two Ali-Frazier battles, Roberto Duran's dramatic knockout of Davey Moore, and Bob Foster's destruction of Dick Tiger will be leveled to make room for office towers.

If these were the '60s, my plan would be to hang around the demolition site the way people once did at the Polo Grounds and Ebbetts Field until I helped myself to, or a friendly worker gave me, a brick or some other piece of memorabilia. But this is 2005, so we can be sure that everything from the chewing gum stuck on the underside of the cheap seats to the soap cakes in the men's room urinals are already earmarked for auction.

News Flash: Broadcaster Chris Schenkel dies at age 82: Though he was best known for his coverage of college football and bowling on ABC, Schenkel had an extensive boxing resume, having hosted *Boxing From Eastern Parkway* and *Boxing From St. Nicholas Arena* on the DuMont network in the '50s.

After Howard Cosell took his infamous stand and divorced himself from the fight game, Schenkel also worked fights for ABC during the '80s. On one such assignment, he committed one of my all-time favorite broadcasting bloopers. When the camera cut to a shot of WBA featherweight champion Barry McGuigan's wife and father sitting together during Barry's 1985 defense against Bernard Taylor, Schenkel said, "There you see Pat McGuigan, the dad, and there's wife Sandra. They are the parents of a three-year-old son, Blaine, and she's expecting the first of 1986."

News Flash: Don King cancels St. Louis card: Virgil Hill fighting for the vacant WBA cruiserweight crown was the scheduled main event, yet ticket sales at the Savvis Center were lackluster.

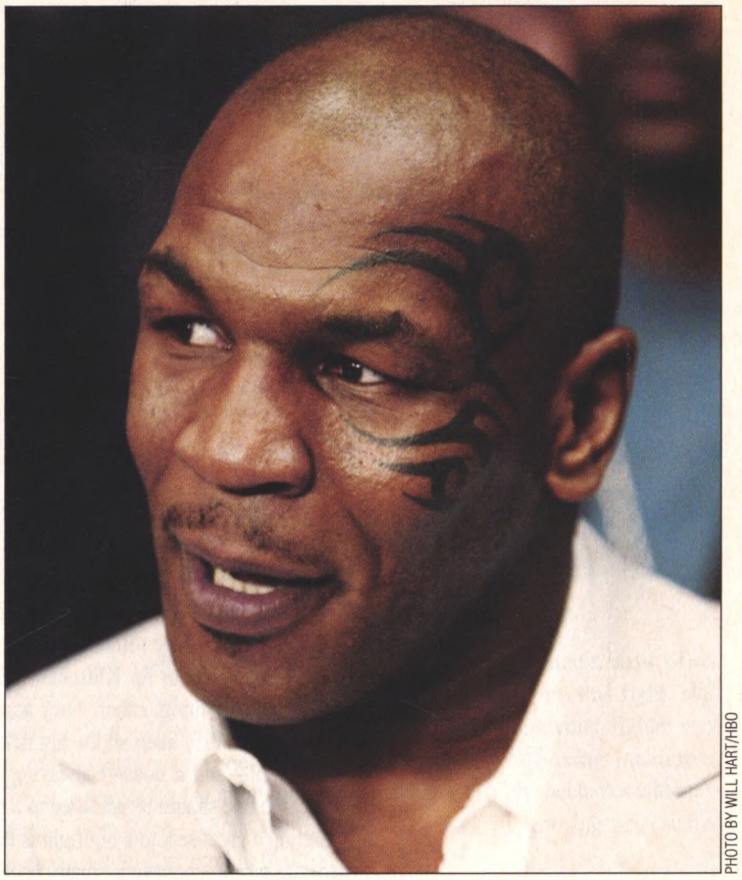


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Tyson: Unwanted by female barflies

Imagine that. Apparently, King's mistake was trying to stage the card in a 19,000-seat hockey arena instead of the backyard of a boarded-up sports bar.

News Flash: Mike Tyson gets a free pass from ESPN Classic: That silliest of shows, *The Top Five Reasons You Can't Blame …*, finally got around to boxing, offering up the top five reasons we can't blame Tyson for his 1990 defeat to Buster Douglas. Apparently, it was the death of Cus D'Amato, a marriage to Robin Givens, an inexperienced corner, the fact that "Kid Dynamite" was overrated, and Douglas fighting the bout of his life that were to blame. Never mind that we were told repeatedly during the program that Tyson didn't train seriously for the fight and thought Douglas was an easy payday.

This show gets stupider with each installment.

News Flash: The Michael is even less appealing than The Donald: The on-demand television network, Mag Rack, surveyed 1,000 women at various New York City bars and asked them to name the celebrities they'd most want to have sex with. Baseball star Derek Jeter finished first, just ahead of comedian Jon Stewart and actress Angelina Jolie. (Yes, the *women* rated her third.) And topping the list of famous people the ladies would least like to bed? The envelope please. Yes, it's none other than "Leg-Iron" Mike Tyson. The ex-heavyweight titlist beat out real estate king Donald Trump, filmmaker Michael Moore, and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

New York is indeed the city that never sleeps—with facially tattooed, manic depressive ex-cons. Coming soon on ESPN Classic: The Top Five Reasons You Can't Blame Mike Tyson For Being Less Appealing Than Brad Pitt. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

I'M SEATED WHERE? MUST BE SOME MISTAKE

People are always asking me for fight tickets. Seems like I can't go out for a cup of coffee without being tackled by somebody I just met or barely know who figures I can get him and his buddies front and center for Klitschko-Rahman. Or at least Hopkins-Taylor II. And none of these people expect to pay anything, either. They assume by virtue of my media status I can just go down to the big fishbowl where they keep all the hot tickets, dip in my fist, and walk off with anything I like. Truth is, if all goes well—and it doesn't always go so well—I can get a seat for myself. Period. And that's all I deserve. No one should be admitted to a big event just because they know someone who knows someone.

Getting a great seat to a big fight is the best part of my job. But boxing isn't like the NFL or baseball, where the promoters have as many as 90,000 seats to play with. So sometimes I show up and discover I'm seated next to a yurt in Tajikistan. And you never know why. Was it something I wrote or said? Or was it somebody's confusion or incompetence? I haven't been relegated to the Slobbovian Steppes in a good long while, but the number of good seats reserved for media has shrunk over the years, making worthy locations tougher to score. Old-hand Graham Houston of the *Boxing Monthly* magazine and *Boxing Update* and *Flash* newsletters remembers when there were media seats all around the ring. Now we're herded into a media ghetto set up on only one side, which places most of us farther from the action.

At the same time, the number of individuals calling themselves media members has increased with the onset of the Internet. Some of these sites are worthy, but others go basically unread and unknown to all but the site writers' immediate family. And lots of people claim to represent radio stations, cable outlets, and publications that exist only in the twilight zone. It's such a headache sorting everybody out for big fights that promoters hire third-party agencies to handle it. That way when somebody

PHOTO BY NICK PETROCCI

Oh say can you see, Goldman?

complains about a crummy seat, the promoter can respond that's not his department.

The whereabouts of your media seat is a state secret. If you try to learn it ahead of time, they act like you just asked for the code to launch a nuclear attack. You get the scoop only a few hours before fight time, after completing a trip of perhaps hundreds or even thousands of miles.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS/HBO

Even up close, it's tough to tell if this Morales right landed

After fight writers get seated, they look around to see where everyone else is in relation to their own location. This tells them how the secret decision-makers figure they and their employer fit within the hierarchy. Franz Kafka, who as far as I know never attended a prizefight, was nevertheless quite familiar with this phenomenon and wrote a book about it called *The Castle*. In it, everybody stumbled around looking for clues to just what the maddening, inscrutable big shots in the castle above the town were thinking and why they did the things they did.

In my case, I won't be satisfied unless my seat allows me to rest my notepad on the ring apron next to one of the judges. That's not just for my own entertainment. It's impossible to accurately score a close fight from a bad seat. I had a relatively decent seat for Erik Morales-Zahir Raheem—six tables back from the ring, making it even with approximately the 12th row of an ordinary seating section. My scoring was just guesswork. You had to be right on top of the ring to see whether Raheem's frequent jabs were scoring. A solid powerpunch makes sweat fly and sends the head on a new trajectory, but fighters can often eat good jabs without reacting—jabs that could be dictating the outcome. Bodyshots present similar problems. Unless you're very close, you might not know whether they're landing or bouncing off the intended recipient's elbow. Even the judges don't always know. That's why they sit on three sides. Scores sometimes differ because of the different viewing angles. Fans in the cheap seats with visual access to the large TV screens above the Staples Center ring had a better perspective on Morales-Raheem than many of the writers, who were too far away to score all the punches properly and too close to view the overhead screen.

Although promoters and their venues, usually casinos, claim to have no direct control over media seating, they sometimes purloin those same seats they claim to know nothing about and give them to non-media friends or celebrities. That shrinks the pie even more. You never even know who did the deed, because the seating process is as mysterious as a New Jersey scorecard. But you can be sure it was someone with plenty of clout. At Oscar De La Hoya-Shane Mosley I, I sat in the media section next to a lady who took no notes and clearly was no journalist. It turned out she was some kind of top-drawer heiress with contacts most of us can't even imagine and a whimsical desire to see this fight. Her knowledge of boxing was limited to figuring out which fighter was which. Also, newspapers that barely cover boxing inevitably demand a batch of good seats for major boxing spectacles and may get them. Afterward they go right back to ignoring prizefights while they tend to their golf stories.

De La Hoya, though worn around the edges, is the last larger-than-life attraction certain to grab the attention of sports pages and the world at large. With Lennox Lewis and Mike Tyson old and retired, the normally top dog heavyweight division is looking more like a Chihuahua. If the Hamlet-like Oscar ever puts on the gloves again with a credible opponent—say, Floyd Mayweather—real and phony media from around the world will clamor for seats. And it will be superstar De La Hoya, not Mayweather, generally considered the best pound-for-pound fighter, who'll have the key to the cash drawer. If you think that's not the way things ought to be, get in line with the several billion other Earthlings who've already figured out life isn't always fair.

Should De La Hoya return for a big fight, no promoter or casino executive in his right mind would give away hundreds of super-event seats to low-level media schlemiels. They could sell many of those seats for $1,000 or more or use them to entice high rollers who could conceivably drop millions at their tables. But they also want all the media spotlights they can attract. That's why casino venues are likely to reserve a spare ballroom for excess media people to watch the spectacle on a big screen. They won't even be in the same room as the fighters and will complain bitterly because they won't get to absorb that big-fight electricity. But ironically, they'll have a better view than many writers in the press section. And when they transmit their stories back to, say, Japan or Belgium, they're unlikely to inform their readers they saw the same televised image they'd have seen at home.

If I'm ever sent to the kiddies' room down the hall, I won't pretend otherwise. But it's hard to say whether that kind of frankness helps or hurts. As I said, there's much mystery involved, with shadowy, inscrutable powers calling the shots—pretty much like life itself. ■

CAMERA CLICKS

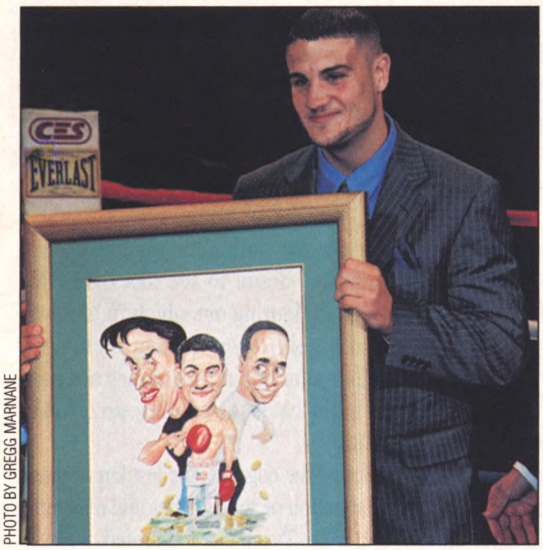


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

Peter Manfredo couldn't even get a draw out of the judges in his rematch with Sergio Mora, but at least he got a drawing out of artist Frank Gallajo a few weeks before the fight. The caricatures are all quite nice, but it wasn't until we took a good look at this picture that we realized just how much Sylvester Stallone is looking like Bette Davis these days.

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Two of Germany's biggest boxing heroes of recent years, the newly retired Dariusz Michalczewski and top female flyweight Regina Halmich, share a friendly embrace while attending the Lamon Brewster-Luan Krasniqi fight in Hamburg. Retirement seems to be suiting Michalczewski just fine—aside from the fact that he appears to be working his way toward a Don King hairstyle.

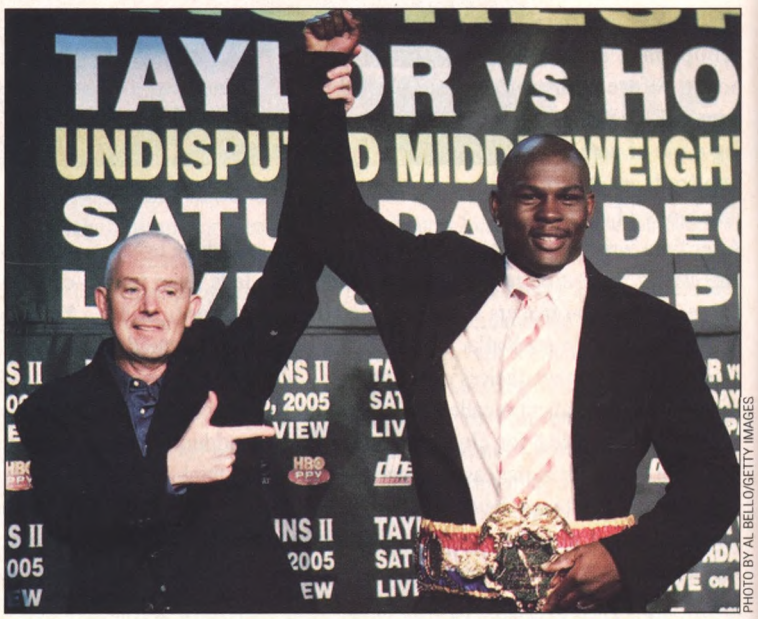


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

It's possible that he'll have been dethroned by right around the time this magazine comes out, but at the time this picture was taken at least, Jermain Taylor was the one and only middleweight champion of the world, and he had the belt to prove it. He also had Ring Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins pointing the ol' handgun at him, proving that some cool hand gestures never go out of style.

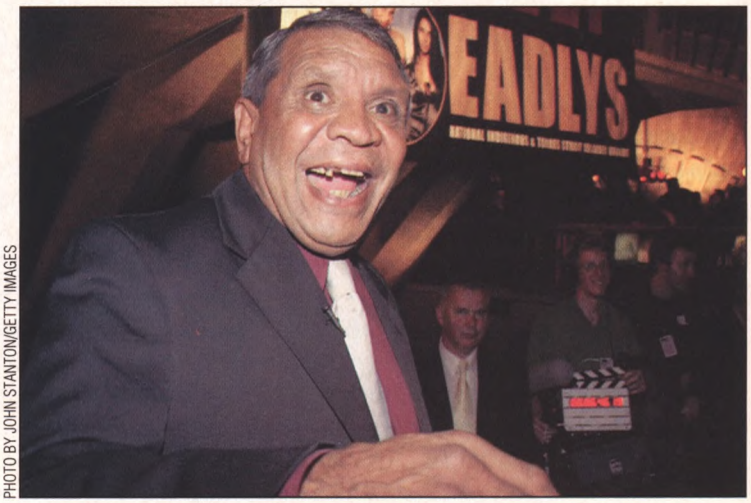


PHOTO BY JOHN STANTON/GETTY IMAGES

"Da plane, boss, da plane!" You're forgiven if you thought you were looking at a picture of Herve Villechaize, but it's actually Lionel Rose, the former world bantamweight champion from Australia. Rose was in Sydney attending the 2005 Deadly Awards (also known as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music, Sport, Entertainment, and Community Awards), and yes, he was in the running for top honors in the Deadliest Teeth category.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

James Toney, meet your next meal. Seriously, doesn't Manny Pacquiao look like he could fit his entire body in Toney's tummy? We hope James doesn't like Filipino food. And Manny, you're not getting off easy either in this caption. You need to be ridiculed for that handshake, which looks all too much like the way an elderly lady would greet someone before sitting down to have tea.

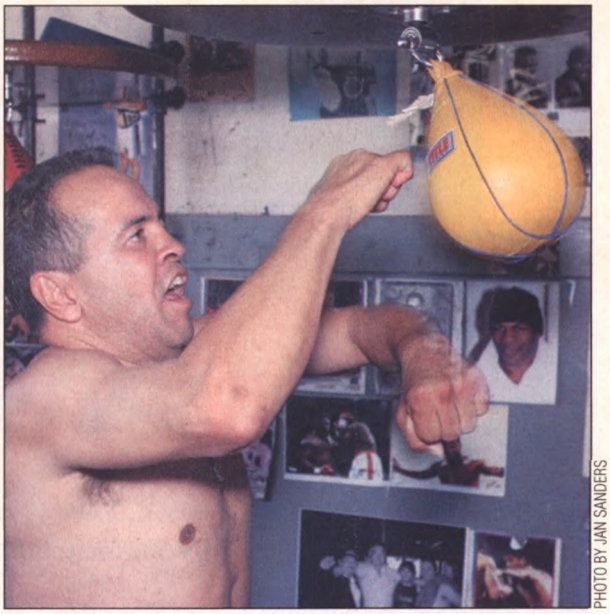


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Hall of Famer Bobby Chacon shows off some of the punching skills that landed him in Canastota this past June—and some of the toughness, too, banging away on the speedbag without the protection of gloves or hand wraps. As we all know, "The Schoolboy" was never in a bad fight, and this battle with the speedbag was no exception, as onlookers compared it to Corrales-Castillo I. (Okay, maybe that's a stretch. But everyone agreed it was at least better than Byrd-Williamson.)

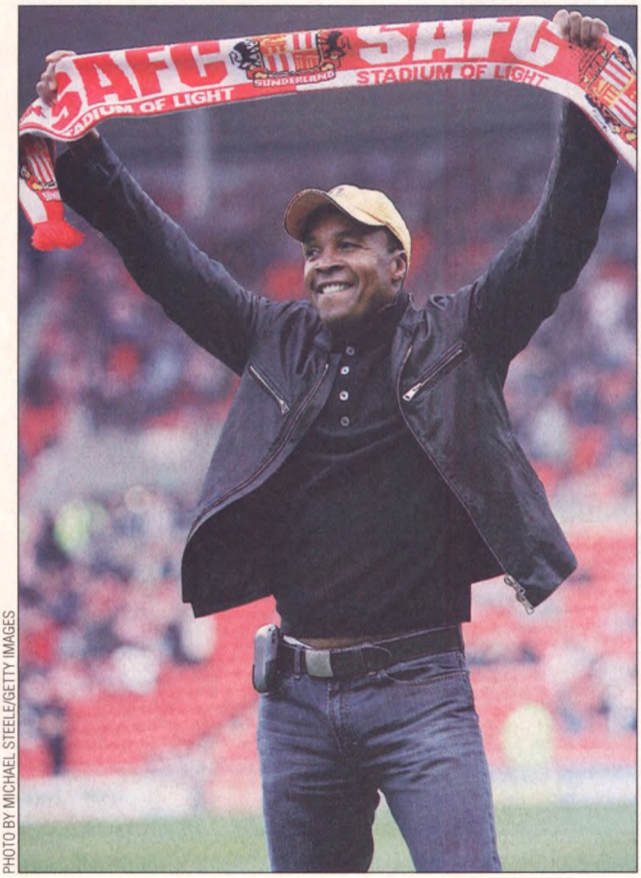


PHOTO BY MICHAEL STEELE/GETTY IMAGES

No, that's not the Contender *belt for Season Two. Sugar Ray Leonard is merely ingratiating himself to the crowd at a soccer match in Sunderland, England, between Sunderland and Manchester United at the Stadium of Light. And if anyone was wondering why Sugar Ray was MIA from the* Contender *rematch show at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, now you know, since this soccer game was going on just a few hours before the opening bell in L.A.*

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Does being able to lift a former heavyweight champion above your head mean that you too can become the champ? Apparently not. Back in 1929, heavyweight hopeful Alberto Morro easily hoisted Jim Jeffries' considerable bulk, but never came close to equaling the accomplishments of his mentor. However, The Ring *Detective has learned that the photo was a fake; Jeffries is actually levitating, a trick he learned from a yoga guru during a goodwill tour of Himalayan hinterlands.*

NEW FACES

AARON GARCIA

Junior Featherweight

By Joe Santoliquito

PRO RECORD

2004		
Sept. 18	Geraldo Robles, Las Vegas, NV	W 4
2005		
Feb. 17	Miguel Medina, Hollywood, CA	W 4
April 9	Brian Garcia, El Paso, TX	W 6
May 5	Carlos Mota, Tucson, AZ	KO 4
July 14	Carlos Mota, Las Vegas	KO 2
Sept. 1	Javier Flores, Tucson	W 4

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
6	6	0	0	2

PHOTO BY ROB DELORENZO

Celso Garcia was never clean. He lived in his work clothes, simply because he had no other choice. With eight kids crammed into a one-room apartment and bills screaming to be paid, Garcia would do any job, and it didn't matter what it was. He went from picking strawberries in California fields for 15 hours a day to lugging bricks for a construction company. He worked weekends, holidays, whatever it took to feed his family.

Therefore, the little time he had to spend with his children were quality moments. Each evening, Garcia would arrive home, his hands still dirty and gnarled from another exhausting shift. Then he would have a family roll call, drawing the attention of his four sons. Every time, little Aaron would be the first to arrive. Aaron knew what he was being called to do: go to the gym with Dad to learn how to fight.

That's where Aaron's love affair with boxing began, when he was six. As he grew older, however, he started to realize a few things. The one-room apartment with the 10 family members squeezed in suddenly began to feel awkward. He also began to have a greater appreciation for his father, a small, proud man with strong hands, coming home each night weary from another day's work. It started to work on Aaron. *I want something better for my family*, he would think, and boxing was the ticket. It's that desire to improve his family's situation that has

(Continued on page 74)

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Hooray . . . Grand Marshal Ryan O'Neal enjoys fans along Parade route.

PROFESSIONAL BOXING SHOW

Fight Night . . . Popular boxers featured in action-packed bouts at Turning Stone Resort & Casino.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Autographs . . . George Foreman spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . Barry McGuigan showing fans his Induction Certificate.

BOXING CARD SHOW

A Collector's Dream . . . Boxing memorabilia for fans. The world's only all-boxing show draws collectors from throughout the world.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

Angelo Dundee and actor Russell Crowe tour the museum together.

WORKOUTS

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RINGSIDE TALKS

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"I WANT TO CHALLENGE MYSELF AND DO SOMETHING GREAT"

WELL THEN, ANTONIO, DON'T FIGHT JONES A FOURTH TIME!

By Don Stradley

The most popular fighters have always been the guys with the best gimmick, whether it's a big punch, great speed, or a colorful personality. The networks love gimmicks. The fans love them too. The media would be lost without them. A good gimmick can keep a fighter in the public eye long after he's lost his skills. Just ask Roberto Duran, Mike Tyson, and Hector Camacho Sr.

Antonio Tarver has always searched for a gimmick. In the early days of his career he dubbed himself "Magic Man," and would enter the ring with a top hat and cane. In those days he would hot dog in the ring, trying to get people to notice him. It didn't really work. In recent years, however, he's developed a more interesting gimmick. It involves meeting Roy Jones every so often and beating him up, which he did again

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Tarver plants a southpaw jab on Jones' chin en route to a 12-round decision in defense of the world light heavyweight championship. Despite winning a unanimous decision with room to spare, it was not a particularly sparkling performance by Tarver, who had stopped Jones in two rounds in their previous bout.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

With Jones seemingly content to last the distance and Tarver playing it safer than he had in their first two fights, the result was a rather tame contest in which many of the pro-Jones crowd switched allegiances and began to chant Tarver's name.

when they faced off October 1 in Tampa. The gimmick not only has people noticing him, but it's also bankable.

With Jones as his foil, Tarver has given us some incredible moments ("Got any excuses tonight, Roy?"), and some pretty good boxing too. But Jones isn't just Tarver's meal ticket. Jones is Tarver's muse. The trash talk that flew out of Tarver's mouth during the Jones trilogy was inspired, passionate stuff. Whatever had been dormant in Tarver came screeching out at warp speed. But remove Jones from Tarver's ledger, and Tarver is suddenly without flavor. Against Glenn Johnson, the best he could do was enter the ring wearing a cardboard crown. Can we expect Tarver to be inspired by the likes of 175-pound contenders Fabrice Tiozzo or Zsolt Erdei? It's not likely. That's why Tarver is actually considering a fourth fight with Jones.

"You never know," Tarver told THE RING. "He could beat Glenn Johnson and be right back in the thick of things. I might give him another shot."

Tarver can't wait to start training for whoever his next opponent might be. But he's hoping for someone who can bring in a Jones-like payday. A third go 'round with Johnson, who scored a knockout over Khalid Jones the night before Tarver-Jones III, is a possibility, but Tarver isn't sure the public wants it. The winner of Bernard Hopkins-Jermain Taylor II might be worthy, but fans are lukewarm toward Taylor, and Hopkins is a negotiations nightmare.

"The heavyweights would be interesting," said Tarver, "but none of them are pay-per-view type fighters. I don't know if I have the status of Roy Jones who could pick on [John] Ruiz and make $12-million. I don't think that would be the case. But I'll wait and see if one of the heavyweights becomes the next big thing. The Klitschkos have a big European audience; maybe we can do David and Goliath. I don't have much more time in the game, maybe three years, so I want to challenge myself and do something great. I have the speed and defense to upset one of the big guys, and I have punching power. It wouldn't surprise me if I turned out one of their lights."

Tarver could also find a challenge from super middleweight terror Jeff Lacy, who allegedly called his promoter during Tarver-Jones III and asked to be hooked up with Tarver for an all-Florida shootout. Lacy and Tarver would be a classic matchup of boxer vs. slugger. It would also snap the 175-pound class out of the Jones-Tarver-Johnson triumvirate that has dominated it since November 2003. Lacy's youth would add another element. Even prior to fighting Jones and Johnson, Tarver was fighting veterans like Montell Griffin and Reggie Johnson. Turning back the challenge of the younger Lacy would be a tremendous addition to Tarver's resume.

"It would be a hell of a fight," said Tarver. "I respect Jeff Lacy. But he needs to get on HBO. Fighting on Showtime won't make him a household name. In order for us to generate the big numbers, he needs to establish himself. If we fought now, he'd only make short money."

Tarver, 24-3 (18), talks a lot about money nowadays. He is still personable, but at times he lapses into a well-rehearsed "Tarver-speak," as if he's given one too many interviews and has his answers ready before you ask the question. He also seems oblivious to the bad reviews that greeted his third bout with Jones. Maybe he doesn't frequent Internet message boards, where bloggers have written him off as lucky to have caught Jones on the downslide. Maybe he doesn't overhear conversations in barbershops and bus stations, where the Jones faithful shake their heads and say a younger Jones would have toyed with him.

Some even wonder if Tarver, who seems to tire in late rounds, is just as washed-up as Jones. But Tarver won't go down as a modern version of Paul Pender, the journeyman who edged a faded Ray Robinson twice in 1960. That's why he said prior to the clash in Tampa, "If Roy Jones is a shot fighter, I'm the one who shot him."

"There's some truth to Tarver catching Jones at the right time, but I think Tarver has the style to have given Jones trouble at any time in his career," said HBO commentator Larry Merchant. As for Tarver's part in the dull rubber match, Merchant feels it's unfair to blame Tarver for the fight's lack of action. "It wasn't a great fight, but Tarver has been unfairly libeled. Tarver fought a guy who didn't come to

fight. Jones kept sticking his tongue out at Tarver, but he was actually sticking his tongue out at the fans that paid to see him. It was Jones who turned it into a glorified sparring session."

But you can't convince Tarver it was a glorified sparring session.

"I have to correct Larry Merchant," Tarver said. "Every fight can't be about two guys slugging it out. Some people don't relish the sweet science of the game. They only love face-first fighters. I'm trying to perfect the art of hitting-and-not-getting-hit. You'll never see me go to sleep with an ice pack on my face."

Tarver also disagreed that Jones stunk the place out. "You haven't seen Roy Jones this good in six or seven years," Tarver said, countering the mass of opinions ranging from *Sports Illustrated*'s Richard Hoffer to every Laptop Larry at ringside.

Whether the fight was good or bad, the enormous crowd at the St. Pete Times Forum seemed happy enough to get one last glimpse of Jones. As the rounds progressed, however, the 20,895 in attendance and the 405,000 pay-per-view buyers at home were not getting much bang for the buck. The most they went away with was a forced sense of poignancy as Jones, 49-4 (38), was simply trying to go the distance with the champ. At the final bell, the crowd cheered appreciatively as if they'd just witnessed a classic. Maybe you had to be there.

"There was more on the line this time," Tarver said, explaining the cautious nature of the bout. "The pressure was on me, fighting in my own backyard. I couldn't slip up. One quick shot from Roy and I'm looking up at the stars. I couldn't let that happen."

Tarver controlled the early rounds by remaining calm and picking his spots. By the fourth, however, Jones began to vamp and shimmy, playing to the crowd that had to come to see him. Still, Jones wouldn't venture into Tarver's power ally. The fighter who had once been able to spring across the ring like a leopard bringing down a gazelle was reduced to clowning like a clubfighter. Meanwhile, Tarver pawed with his right jab and kept his heavy left hand cocked, doing just enough to win rounds. For a guy who has been victimized by bad scoring more than once,

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Tarver did his best work when he cornered Jones on the ropes and opened up with both hands. Unfortunately for the capacity crowd and HBO's more than 400,000 pay-per-view customers, this sort of action was rare. Tarver wobbled Jones in the 11th round, but failed to finish him.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

Glen Johnson (left), who has split a pair of title bouts with Tarver and scored a comeback kayo the night before Tarver-Jones III, would love a rubber match with the "Magic Man." IBF super middleweight titleholder Jeff Lacy (above) is also eager to be Tarver's next challenger.

it was a curious way to establish dominance.

Then, after 10 rounds of poking and probing, the roof almost fell in.

Early in the 11th, Tarver ducked one of Jones' punches and countered with a right hook that traveled like a knuckleball and nearly tore Roy's jaw from its hinges. Jones was dazed, but still had the instinct to step aside when Tarver charged at him, leaving the champion jack-knifed over the top ring rope. After hurling himself back into the ring like a member of Cirque Du Soleil, Tarver chased Jones into a corner and battered him with both hands. Jones appeared out on his feet, but just when it seemed he was going down, Tarver backed off, looking as if he'd just fought for 30 hard rounds instead of 10 tepid ones. Now it was Jones' turn to rally, but he had nothing left. A solid punch from either guy would have ended the fight.

"The intensity was kind of draining," Tarver said, explaining his sudden fatigue. "I was constantly thinking in there, and that can be exhausting. And there were a few rounds that must've lasted 4½ minutes. Go back and time the 11th and 12th rounds. Those were at least four-minute rounds. I think the timekeeper was trying to give Roy a chance to get me."

The nail-biter of an 11th should have set up a climactic final frame, but the 12th saw Tarver killing the clock on tired legs, stopping now and then to throw a spaghetti-armed flurry. Tarver's measured battle plan was enough to beat Jones' showboating, as judges Paul Herman, Michael Pernick, and Peter Trematerra, scored the fight for THE RING champion by tallies of 116-112, 116-112, and 117-111, respectively.

Tarver, in all seriousness, thinks Jones

is determined to keep the rivalry alive. "He might have a bone in his ass he just needs to pick." But maybe it's Tarver who wants the rivalry to continue.

"Tarver is the glibbest and wittiest fighter since Ali," said Merchant. "But Tarver had an unusual attitude before this fight. He felt he wasn't given his just due. There's some letdown because he's not the star. He's feeling unappreciated. I don't think that's altogether true. People do appreciate him. But the buildup to this fight was all about Jones."

Prior to the fight, Tarver said he might not be appreciated until after he retires, but Jones' postfight admission of defeat was quite satisfying for Tarver.

"Roy was at the mountaintop," Tarver said. "I was always scratching my way to the top to prove I belonged. Now Roy might feel that Antonio Tarver is the pinnacle. Now Roy is determined to beat me. But I'm hard to beat. He may have to fight me four or five times before he's convinced."

Sometimes Tarver looks at Jones and still sees the wunderkind who dominated their local youth tournaments. "Even at age 13, his name reigned in Florida," said Tarver.

As a boy, Tarver's mother moved the family 30 miles away from the gym where Tarver trained, taking him away from boxing. Tarver was hurt by not being able to box, and it hurt him to watch Jones rise to incredible heights. It took Tarver a long time to catch up, and he stumbled several times along the way.

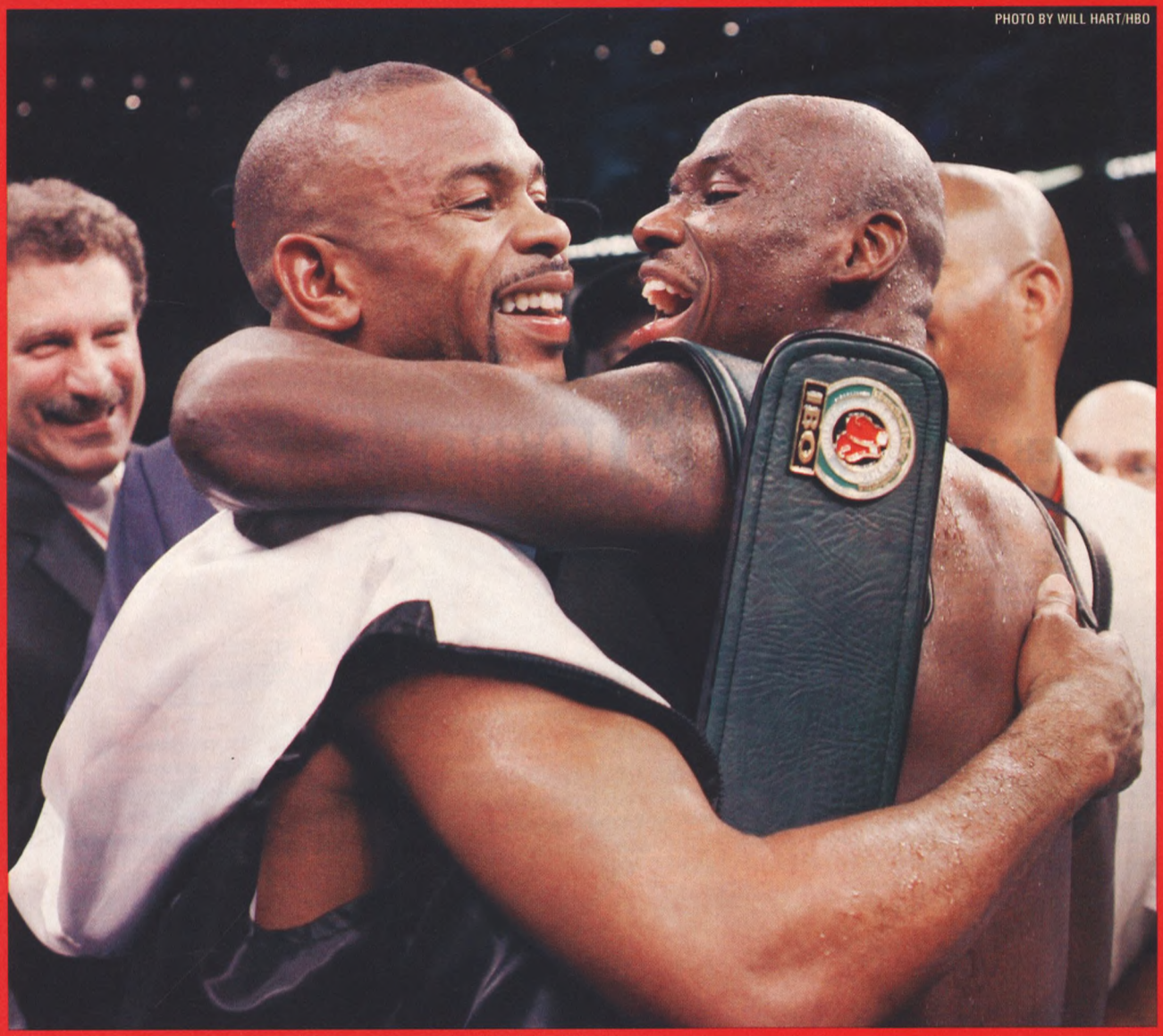
"Sometimes I wonder, What if I hadn't lost all that time and we'd been on the same Olympic team?" said Tarver. "What if we had turned pro together?"

There's a yearning inside Tarver to make up for those lost years. He could beat Jones four or five times and it still wouldn't be enough to satisfy him.

But we're satisfied. It's time for Tarver to find a new gimmick. Hopefully, it won't involve Jones, a top hat, or a cane. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO



Both Jones and Tarver look delighted as they embrace at the end of their third encounter. From a financial point of view, Tarver would like to fight Jones again, but it is doubtful boxing consumers are anywhere as interested as Tarver in seeing a fourth match between them.

CASTILLO-CORRALES II

WHEN THE RULE-BREAKERS WIN ... IT'S TIME TO REEVALUATE THE SYSTEM

By Ivan Goldman

At least fans can take comfort that Jose Luis Castillo's rematch victory over Diego Corrales wasn't decided by yet another controversial scoring decision. The mighty left hook that kayoed Corrales in the fourth round had nothing to do with officiating. It was a beautiful shot and clean as a whistle.

But the knockout that ended one of the most anticipated bouts in years didn't erase a boiling controversy that preceded it, repeating the pattern of their first contest. In fact, thanks to one of those yin-yang arrows of justice that seem to target boxing, the two rivals are now tied in the rules-tweaking department. In the first bout last May, Corrales gained time to recuperate from two consecutive knockdowns by twice spitting out his mouthpiece. In the October rematch, Castillo likely tilted things his way by

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Castillo celebrates his emphatic but somewhat tainted knockout of Corrales. As in their epic first encounter, Castillo's best weapon was the left hook, which he landed early and often before he finally flooring his rival for the 10-count with a final hook in the fourth round.

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

As in their first fight, Castillo and Corrales went right after each other at the sound of the opening bell. Defense was virtually abandoned in their enthusiasm for all-out slugging. Seldom have two fighters packed so much action into less than 14 rounds of boxing.

failing to starve himself down to the required 135 pounds. No one can prove that breaking rules is what caused their victories, but in each case the rule-breaker won.

In the rubber match that will surely come, the two warriors deserve no new controversy. A fair face-off is something all fighters merit, and that may be especially true of Castillo and Corrales, whose names will forever be entwined, the Yankees and the Dodgers, Ali and Frazier, Louis and Schmeling. They carved their places in the upper echelons of boxing because of their historic first battle and because they are fighters in the finest sense—exciting, talented men who disregard their own safety to put it all on the line every time out of the chute.

"We are both buffalos," Castillo said. That's a characteristic as undisputable as the mutual kayos they scored over each other in back-to-back contests. At the same time, their second match raised questions not confined to one particular fight, but to the very marrow of the sport itself.

Nevada ringside physician Dr. Flip Homansky spearheaded a successful movement in the 1980s to give fighters 24 hours of slack time after the weigh-in so they wouldn't be dangerously dehydrated in the ring. But in actual practice, the 24 hours is now often 30 or more, and Homansky supports returning to same-day weigh-ins. Corrales-Castillo II, he said, "only strengthened my resolve" to change it back.

The fighters signed a contract to fight as lightweights and entered the ring as welters or junior middleweights. That, of course, is business as usual. Fighters punish themselves to get down to the contractual weight the day before the fight, and then pump themselves up with liquids and nutrients, coming in much bigger at fight time. Corrales took this standard route, starving and dehydrating himself to get down to 135 for the weigh-in Friday afternoon. When he entered the ring more than 30 hours later, he was up to 149.

The fact that Castillo never made weight was shocking, but something that's been seen before, even in title fights. What made this case different was the very real possibility that the Castillo camp decided long before the weigh-in to take advantage of rules and circumstances and not even try to make weight.

"It takes something out of someone to get down to the weight," Corrales' promoter, Gary Shaw, complained. "Diego had said before the fight that if he had to, he would die trying to make the weight. What happened here was unfair."

Castillo's excess poundage cast a dark shadow over the contest. For a while, it wasn't even clear whether it would proceed. In the first fight, Corrales walked off with Castillo's RING championship belt and two alphabet straps. They were supposed to be at stake in the rematch, but because Castillo was over the weight, they weren't. Ultimately, Castillo had to pay a fine for not living up to his contract, but he won the fight, which is what will be remembered by the record books and most fans.

Some questions surrounding the circumstances of Castillo's weight were never quite answered to everyone's satisfaction. "This is getting to be like a courtroom," protested Castillo in the postfight press conference. He wanted to talk about the

kayo, but fight writers kept hammering away at weightier (pun intended) issues.

It's impossible for the Castillo team to claim absolute innocence, given the fact that at one point the Nevada Commission's executive director, Marc Ratner, caught the fighter's physician, Dr. Armando Barak, placing a foot under the scale to tilt the reading.

It all started when at 2:35 p.m. Friday, October 7, Castillo climbed on the scale, and Ratner announced his weight at 137. This produced varying degrees of shock, disappointment, and anger among the two fighters and their team members. Castillo's people even hurled accusations at one another.

Commission rules allowed Castillo an additional two hours to make the weight. He returned at 3:36 p.m. That's when Ratner spotted Barak jamming his foot under the scale. Ratner angrily ordered him to stand back and pronounced Castillo's weight at 138½. He also acknowledged he may have been fooled at the first weigh-in, when he called the weight at 137.

Castillo mounted the scale a third time at 4:12 p.m., still weighing 138½. At that point he was fined $120,000 of his $1.2-million purse, with half going to the commission and half to Corrales, whose original purse was $2-million.

The commission ordered Castillo to weigh in again the next day at 3 p.m., informing him he would be fined $75,000 for every pound over 147. He came in at exactly 147. By this time the bitterness between the two camps had hit the red zone. Castillo, reacting to a remark from Shaw, challenged him to a $100,000 bet that he would kayo Corrales. They shook on it, creating yet another controversy that remains unresolved.

Shaw didn't pay up. Lee Samuels, publicist for Arum, said it was his boss who put the kibosh on the bet. "You can't do things like that," Samuels said. But wagering is legal in Nevada, and Arum's Top Rank organization never made it clear precisely when the bet was called off. Other fighters and their team members have made such wagers in the past. But the practice is questionable.

If it's okay for a fighter to bet on himself, a line still must be drawn somewhere short of his betting on the other guy. What if he bets the over-under and extends the bout in order to reach the point required for him to win the wager?

Castillo's people revealed that two weeks before the fight, Barak, evidently with Castillo's approval, had fired trainer Tiburcio Garcia. Manager Fernando Beltran blamed the weight problem on Garcia's absence. After Castillo's victory, his team said he'd injured a rib two weeks earlier, missing four days of training. Castillo said he didn't need Garcia anyway, that he worked beautifully with Vegas fix-

AN INSIDER'S LOOK

Showtime analyst Steve Farhood spent time with both fighters during the last days before the fight. "I can only tell you what I saw, and I saw more than some," he said. "I interviewed Castillo on Thursday (two days before the bout) and I spoke to him with Steve Albert and Nick Charles Friday, two hours before the weigh-in, so I believe my observations are relevant in terms of when he decided he was not going to make weight.

"Both times he was cordial, calm, and gave no physical signs of trying to make weight. But Corrales came into the interview Friday with his tongue heavy, his diction not good. He was clearly dried out. The signals I got from Castillo, though, told me this was not a fighter struggling to make weight.

"The bottom line is at what point Castillo decided he was not going to make weight. If he made that determination five days before the weigh-in, that was a huge advantage. If he didn't make weight after sitting in the sauna and starving himself right up to the day of the fight, advantage Corrales."

If Castillo did in fact manipulate the situation to his advantage, Farhood observed, that's reason enough to stiffen the rules. But it's also possible, he added, that Corrales just didn't recover as well as Castillo from their first war, and that this determined the outcome. Or perhaps the two factors combined to create the result.

"Clearly, Corrales was unable to absorb the punishment he absorbed in the first fight," Farhood said. "In the first fight the strength level was equal. This time Castillo was clearly the stronger fighter and seemed stronger from the beginning. Was that related to the weight issue? I don't know." But if Farhood were forced to make a bet on it, it's clear which side he'd take.

—I.G.

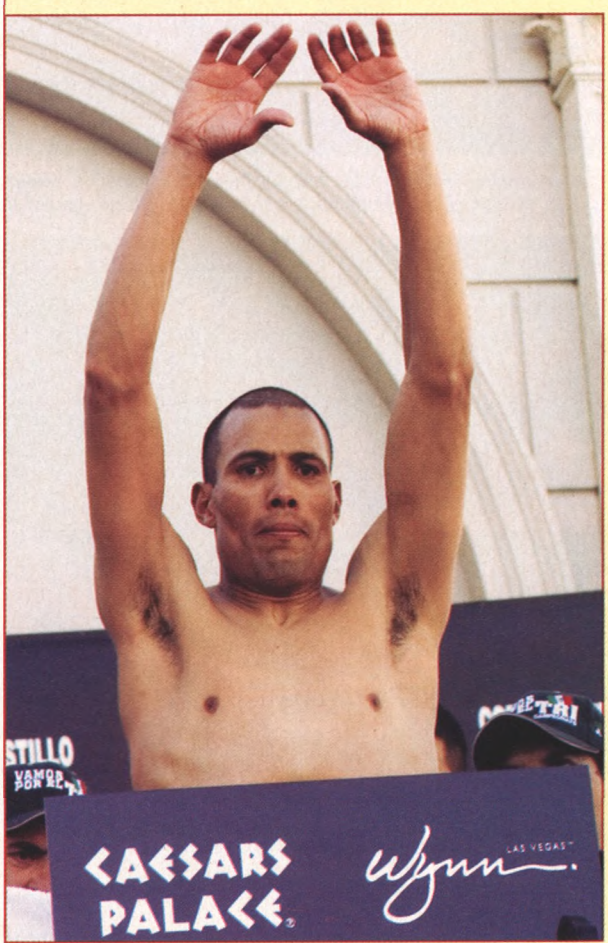
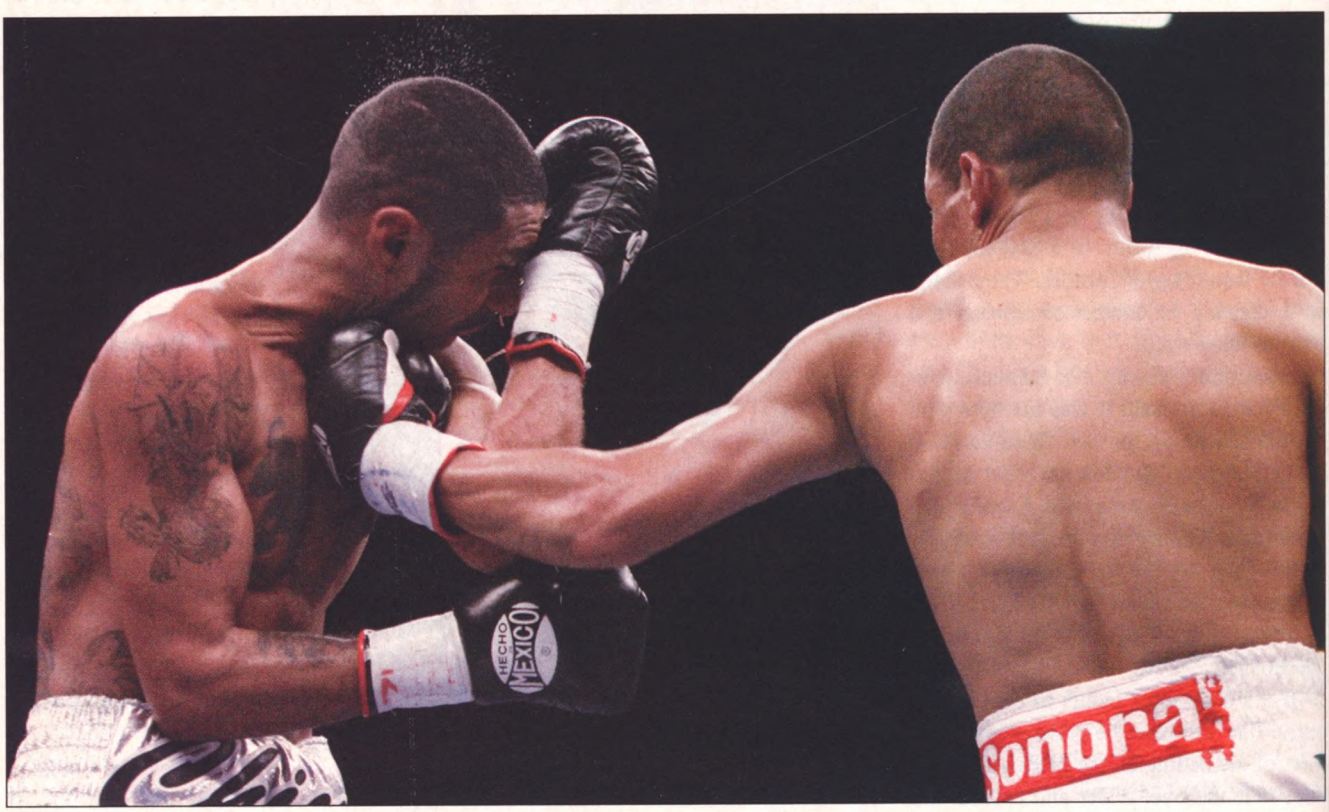


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

Castillo weighed in twice, but never came close to making the lightweight limit

PHOTOS BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Although never as competitive as their incredible first bout, both fighters landed plenty of leather. Corrales connected with his share of left hooks (above), but Castillo usually had more power in his hooks (below), and he rocked "Chico" several times before knocking him out in the fourth round.



ture Miguel Diaz in his corner. Also missing from the corner was toe-jamming Barak, who'd been banished by Ratner.

At whatever point Castillo's team decided to give up on getting him down to 135, they no doubt considered the fact that titles have been losing importance for years as alphabet gangs took their confusing, corrupt rules and practices over the top. Victory was more important than any titles. Years ago, the reverse may have been true.

Corrales could have refused to fight the weightier Castillo, but more than 15,000 fans had bought tickets and many more were set to gather in homes for the Showtime pay-per-view card. Besides, it's almost inhuman to ask a man punished by seven weeks of intense training to abruptly abandon his mission—especially a warrior as eager to fight as Corrales. In fact, even though the rules precluded his titles from being at stake, Corrales actually sought to risk them anyway. The request was denied. It's an open question whether any of those fans felt cheated because they paid for a title fight and didn't get one. But it's likely they'd have felt even more cheated had the fight been cancelled.

Meanwhile, insiders wondered what Castillo actually weighed in previous bouts, that perhaps this is only the first time Barak's toe stood out like a sore thumb. "You really think this is the first

GOOD WHILE IT LASTED

Within seconds of the opening bell, it was clear this was a continuation of Castillo-Corrales I, with round 11 starting four months after Corrales TKO'd Castillo in round 10. They came out to the center of the ring with no preliminaries, went in close, and mostly stayed there. The first big shot to land was a left hook from Castillo. From the start he was more accurate. His punches had more snap and more effect. About halfway into the fight he began mixing in deadly uppercuts. It was the only round that could conceivably have been scored for Corrales, and one judge scored it that way.

But by round two, Corrales was already busting up—fighting hard and still dangerous, but behind. He couldn't seem to hurt Castillo. The fighters moved in close from the start of round three and stayed there. They kept throwing, but there were surprisingly few counterpunches. It was almost like a gentlemen's agreement: My turn, your turn. Neither man neglected the body. Castillo, who'd been doing the most damage with his left hooks, made Corrales stagger back to the ropes with a big right. Though already marked up, "Chico" recuperated and fired back.

In round four, Corrales landed a couple of hooks. Too eager, he dropped his right, and Castillo, 53-7-1 (47), threaded the needle with a perfect hook that spun Corrales, 40-3 (33), down to the canvas, where he looked helpless but somewhat conscious. Amazingly, he made it up at the count of 10, but he was unsteady and staggering. There would be no miraculous recovery as in Castillo-Corrales I. Referee Joe Cortez (USA) correctly counted him out 47 seconds into the round.

—I.G.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

Corrales crumbles to the canvas after fielding Castillo's finishing hook

ITCHING FOR REMATCH

Although the two camps were no longer on speaking terms, they both made it clear they expect a third fight. Castillo says he'd be happy to make this into a *Rocky* series and face Corrales several times. After all, Sugar Ray Robinson and Jake LaMotta fought six times. Castillo-Corrales II had a rematch clause. Such clauses were actually banned for a period after the Floyd Patterson-Ingemar Johansson trilogy. One problem is that if two fighters at the top of their division keep going at each other, it shuts others out. Don't Jesus Chavez and Zahir Raheem deserve the chance to move up?

Also, the sport is more watchful over fighters' health than it was in LaMotta and Robinson's day. And Corrales and Castillo seem programmed to go at each other like lions, with defense largely absent. It's questionable how often they should do this, even if they do compete at a mutually accepted weight. Just because you own quantities of nitro and glycerin doesn't necessarily mean you must mix them. Micky Ward didn't really need that punishing third contest against Arturo Gatti, and neither did the fans.

It might be preferable for Castillo, 31, and Corrales, 28, to avoid each other for at least a year or so. If they fight other opponents in the interim, it would provide a clearer picture of just how they measure up against each other and what went wrong with Corrales in their second match. Possibly, his famous wars impaired his abilities. If his rocket fuel is indeed burned out, it still made a beautiful flame while it lasted.

—I.G.

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE

There's much talk of a rubber match, but how much more can Corrales take?

time they pulled this trick?" asked former WBA bantam champion Wayne McCullough.

"When we changed the rule, the purpose was to make fights safer," Homansky said. "But I haven't seen any improvement in terms of fighters making the weight appropriately. What I have seen are contracts signed at 135 pounds and kids fighting at welterweight. That doesn't make any sense at all. If their best fighting weight is at 147, they should make a contract at 147."

Under the present rules, it's more likely, he said, that one fighter would come in much heavier than another. He cited Arturo Gatti's 2000 devastating first-round kayo of Joey Gamache. It was supposed to be a junior welter fight, but it was generally agreed Gamache looked like a munchkin next to Gatti.

All sports, when they reach the world-class level, have competitors looking for an edge, sometimes outside the rules. "But none of those other sports," Homansky noted, "have the inherent danger that boxing does." Occasional controversies won't kill a sport, but there's no doubt that at some point the weight of them begin to sink it.

Even if Castillo didn't manipulate the weight rules, the idea is now out there and could be carried through by other fight teams. But if a rule change goes through, that still wouldn't prevent fighters from coming in overweight. Only stiffer penalties can do that. ■

Ivan Goldman is THE RING's West Coast correspondent.

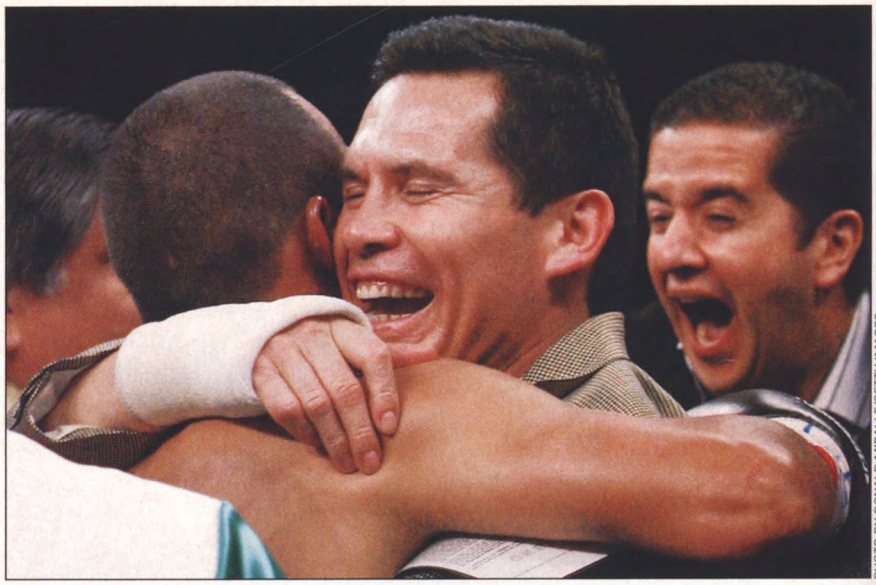


PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Living legend Julio Cesar Chavez embraces his former sparring partner moments after the fight was over. Although Castillo didn't regain the lightweight title, the kayo victory over his former conqueror brought joy to the hearts of all Mexican fight fans.

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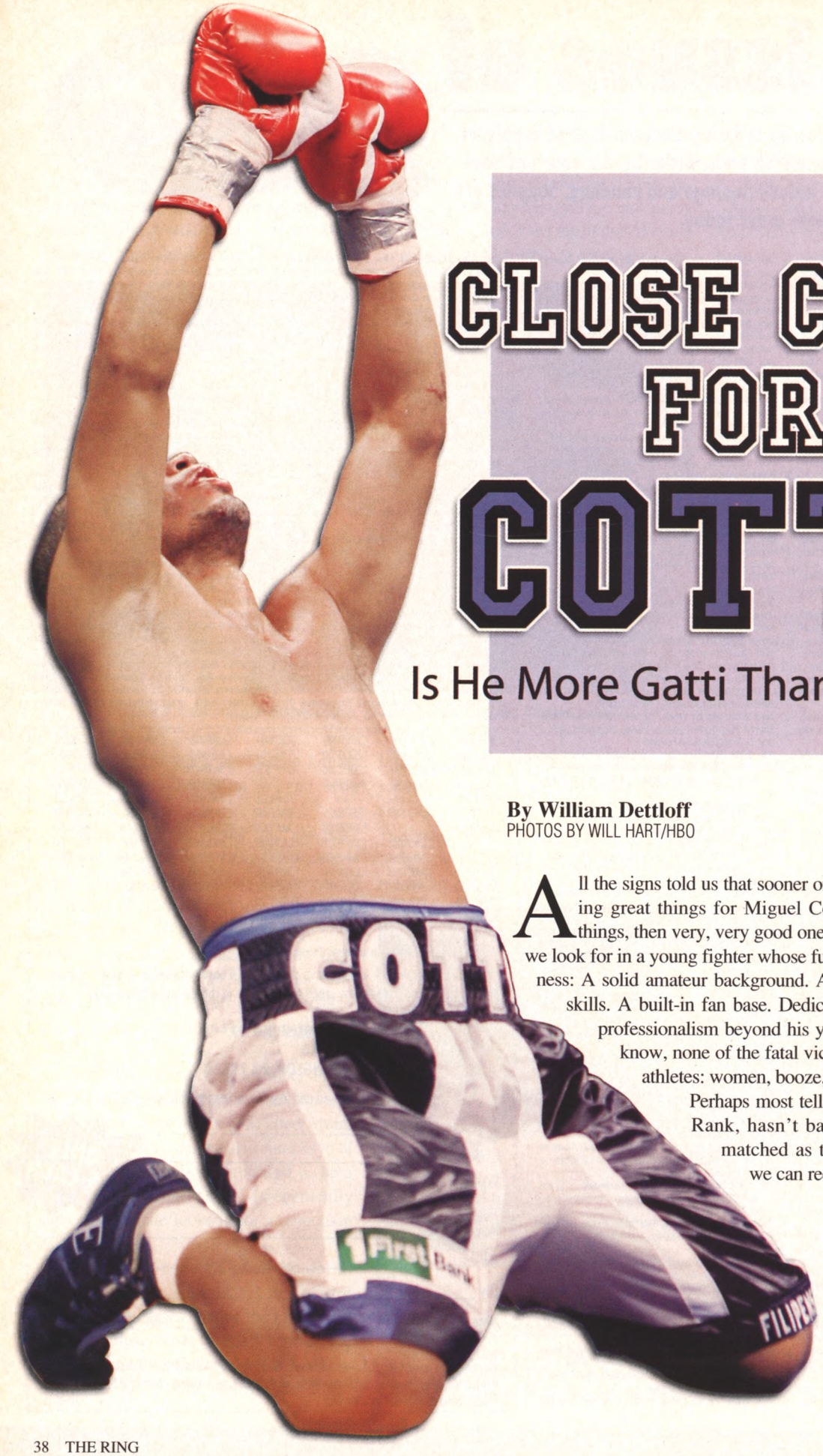

CLOSE CALL FOR COTTO

Is He More Gatti Than Trinidad?

By William Dettloff
PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

All the signs told us that sooner or later we'd be predicting great things for Miguel Cotto. And if not great things, then very, very good ones. He has all the things we look for in a young fighter whose future hints at real greatness: A solid amateur background. A big punch. Excellent skills. A built-in fan base. Dedication, composure, and professionalism beyond his years, and, as far as we know, none of the fatal vices that afflict so many athletes: women, booze, hubris.

Perhaps most telling, his promoter, Top Rank, hasn't babied him. He's been matched as tough as any prospect we can recall. And he hasn't lost

Torres and Cotto traded knockdowns in an unexpectedly competitive and exciting fight. Although Cotto survived Torres' power surge and rallied back to score a seventh-round knockout, the give-and-take nature of the fight has raised new questions about the undefeated Puerto Rican, who sank to his knees in joyous relief when it was all over (opposite page).

yet. Or even won controversially. At this point, even the hottest prospects, if they're matched hard, will have a disputed decision win or two on their ledger. Cotto has won outright over every guy he's been in with and some of them were good and difficult fighters.

Many of us have been waiting to anoint him the next great Puerto Rican prizefighter and none too soon, considering Felix Trinidad's apparently permanent departure. Can't you picture it? Wilfredo Gomez, Edwin Rosario, Felix Trinidad, Miguel Cotto. Not as polished as Gomez, as explosive as Rosario, or as charismatic as "Tito," but enough of each of those guys to make a hell of a good fighter and maybe a future Hall of Famer. Premature? Sure. But the signs were there.

Maybe they still are. Maybe Cotto's recent exciting struggles against Demarcus Corley and especially Ricardo Torres were just a byproduct of the brave matchmaking we've congratulated him on so far. That would be just like us, wouldn't it? Praise the guy for taking tough matches and then downgrade him because things got rough. Really, if Cotto proved anything during his seventh-round stoppage of Torres in front of 10,137 fans at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall on September 24, it is that he is all fighter.

Cotto showed his mettle by climbing off the floor and battling back with his own two-fisted attack. His ability to overcome adversity reminded some of Felix Trinidad, who frequently suffered knockdowns before prevailing. His vulnerability reminds others of Arturo Gatti.

"He's a tough kid. He's got a lot of guns and lot of balls too," veteran trainer Al Certo told THE RING. "He shows a lot of guts out there. I like him. If his legs and chin hold up, he can be around a long time. He's got youth on his side."

Cotto's win over Torres would be a Fight of the Year candidate in any year in which Diego Corrales and Jose Luis Castillo weren't knocking each other's brains all over Las Vegas every other week. It was that kind of fight. It was that exciting. And that's the problem. Great fighters are rarely that exciting. And guys who are as exciting as Cotto was against Torres, and, to a lesser degree against Corley, rarely turn out to be great.

Generally, prizefighters that get remembered are one of two things: very exciting, or legitimately great. Very few are both. There's a good reason for that: It's vulnerability that makes a fighter exciting. And the great ones are too dominant, at least until they're at or near the end, to be especially vulnerable. If they were, they wouldn't qualify as great. There are a couple of exceptions, guys that fall right on the line. Matthew Saad Muhammad is one. Mickey Walker another. Thomas Hearns too.

What makes the exciting ones exciting is they teeter on the tip of defeat and then find a way to win. The way Cotto did against Torres. The great ones win like they're getting out of bed in the morning, like it's natural. They don't understand what all the drama is about. It's easy. Nothing exciting about it.

Just to be clear, we're not talking about the kind of exciting that real hardcore junkies dig. We're not talking about Willie Pep exciting, or Ray Robinson

Despite being undefeated in 28 pro bouts going into his fight with Cotto, Torres was virtually unknown in the United States. Nonetheless, the Colombian came to win and came very close to doing just that in a hard-hitting slugfest. We'd love to see him again.

It was Cotto's strength-sapping left hooks to the body that finally turned the fight his way. But without a stout chin and a big heart, he might not have lasted long enough to stage such a thrilling comeback.

exciting. Yes, those guys were exciting, but in a narrow sense. Revisit some of that old footage. You don't get excited watching those guys. You get humbled a little. Or awed. If you really know what you're looking at, maybe you get a little teary-eyed at the genius. But not excited.

That's not the kind of excitement we're talking about. We're talking about the kind that grabs you by your flapping, potato-chip-smeared jowls and rips you out of your bleacher seat or off the couch. The kind that makes you shout when you really don't want to, when your mouth is full or when you know it's inappropriate or will be embarrassing, but you can't help it. It's involuntary. It just comes out. That's the kind we're talking about.

Some of the great sluggers could do that to you. Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Mike Tyson when he was young (don't deny it now just because he fooled you). But mostly, the great fighters weren't exciting. Muhammad Ali, inside the ropes, where we couldn't hear him, was largely a bore. Same with Archie Moore; too scientific most of the time to qualify as exciting. Sam Langford, Jack Johnson, Carlos Monzon. Benny Leonard, Pernell Whitaker, Julio Cesar Chavez. Too good to be truly exciting. Too dominant.

Rocky Graziano? Exciting, but not great. Arturo Gatti, the modern-day patron saint of exciting bleeders too. And Ray Mancini, Gatti's precursor. And Frank "The Animal" Fletcher. Salvador Sanchez was great. Danny "Little Red" Lopez was exciting. One more: Bobby Chacon: exciting. Alexis Arguello: great. See the difference?

Up until the Torres fight, you could say with justification that Cotto was more Trinidad than Gatti. You could throw out the Corley fight if you wanted; it was the only time we'd ever seen him hurt. Plus, he was getting tagged by hard counter right hooks from a slick, experienced southpaw. And every second that he wasn't hurt, he was tearing up Corley inside on the way to becoming the first fighter to stop him. He sucked it up, put some heavy leather on his opponent, and pulled it out. So you give him credit and move on.

It was different with Torres, 28-1 (26), who took the fight on just a couple of weeks notice after Cotto's original opponent, Gianluca Branco, pulled out with an injury. Despite his impressive kayo percentage, few took Torres seriously. He'd fought just once outside his native Colombia (that in Puerto Rico) and never against a top-rated or even recognizable junior welterweight name. But he came to fight.

Cotto, 25-0 (21), started quickly, dropping Torres in the opening round. But just when you thought it was going to be a blowout Torres rocked Cotto with a right. Torres battered, hurt, and eventually floored Cotto in the second, but spent all of his bullets trying to take him out. Cotto took seemingly dozens of hard, flush shots while trying to make it to the end of the round, which was a long time coming. He demonstrated by making it there that he's exponentially harder to knock out than he is to hurt, and by the third he was wailing away at Torres' body like he'd been in charge all along.

"He's got very fast recuperative powers, that's a plus," Certo said. "And he always comes back firing. The way he hits to the body is great. That's his biggest punch."

Referee David Fields steers Cotto to a neutral corner after the final knockdown of the fight. Whether Cotto is the new Trinidad, the Puerto Rican Gatti, or something in between remains to be seen. HBO's Jim Lampley says Cotto reminds him of a young Fernando Vargas.

Those are traits, of course, that Cotto shares with Trinidad: his ability to bounce back after being floored and his body attack. But on the former charge, it must be said that on the many occasions that Trinidad was dropped during his championship days, his head was clear by the time the referee got to "three" in his count. No one saw Trinidad very hurt until his loss to Bernard Hopkins. All of those knockdowns at the hands of David Reid and Oba Carr and Yory Boy Campas were flash knockdowns more than anything. When Cotto gets rocked, he gets hurt.

Still, it's hard to denigrate the guy for coming back as well as Cotto did considering how badly he was hurt. And his problems weren't over yet. Torres hurt him badly again in the fifth, after Cotto had floored him for a second time in the fourth, and though he didn't go down, he could have. In fact, if not for the fact that he had dished out about as much as he had taken, the fight might have been worth stopping. Torres pounded him around the ring, but Cotto bit down hard, stayed upright, and dropped Torres in the sixth before finally ending it at 1:52 of the seventh.

All's well that ends well. Perhaps the most relieved person, besides Cotto, was his promoter, Bob Arum, who has invested a lot of time and money in building Cotto into a star. Will Arum continue to match him tough?

It was, in many ways, comparable to Gatti's breakout knockout win over Wilson Rodriguez almost a full decade before. It had all the markings of a Gatti fight. There was nothing Trinidad-like about it, aside from the bodyshots. So just who is Cotto? Is he Gatti? Or is he Trinidad?

"Neither," said HBO's Jim Lampley. "I see him as being somewhat analogous to an early Fernando Vargas in the sense that he's got boxing skills and a very serviceable left hook to the body that will win him a lot of fights. Vargas was also a little better in the stand-up-and-box situation, but Miguel can do that too. Like Vargas, the boxing skill is there, but he does not have the great quickness. When he has opened up against guys and tried to trade punches, it has been instantly demonstrated when he was going up against a guy with faster hands."

Lampley is right. When faced with guys who were bigger punchers, or at least were billed that way—Mohammed Abdullaev, Kelson Pinto, Randall Bailey—Cotto boxed within himself, stayed smart and elusive, and gradually broke his opponents down. The punchers never hurt him. They never came close. It was the quicker-handed Corley and Torres who broke through and rocked him by beating him to the punch while he was in mid-combination. It may be that Cotto is at his most vulnerable when he is also the most dangerous: when he's the bigger, stronger fighter and he knows it. It may not be, as many have offered, that his chin isn't what one would hope it to be.

"As a result of the Torres fight, some will have a question about his chin, but the guy he was fighting clearly had fast hands and dynamite in them," Lampley said. "When he stayed outside and left-hooked to the body, he owned the fight. That's the way Vargas had to do it and that's the way Miguel Cotto has to do it. Vargas was never blindingly fast, but he was good enough to get off. Never was Vargas like Oscar De La Hoya or Shane Mosley, and Miguel isn't going to be like that either. But he knows how to fight and he certainly isn't afraid of combat. He has heart, and once you feel his left hook to the liver or kidney, the amount of time you want to spend fighting him is going to diminish. And the more he lands it, the less time you time you will want to continue to fight him."

There's this too: Cotto is only 24 years old. Despite his credentials and the quality of guys he's faced, he still is young, even in this business. There are things he can do in the gym to shore up his defense, even when he is in puncher mode.

"He's got to learn a few things. He's got to learn how to pace himself and protect himself when he's punching," suggested Certo. "He just wings punches, he doesn't realize he puts himself in danger. And he's got to learn that nobody can fight for three minutes a round every round. You have to pace yourself and set a guy up for certain punches. Guys today just want to throw punches. But he's an exciting kid."

If that's all Cotto turns out to be, that's fine. We can never have too many exciting fighters. They get remembered too, and that's one of the reasons fighters fight—to get remembered. But great is a rare quality. Usually, it's something you're born to, not something you can manufacture. Maybe Cotto was born to it. We'll find out either way soon enough. ■

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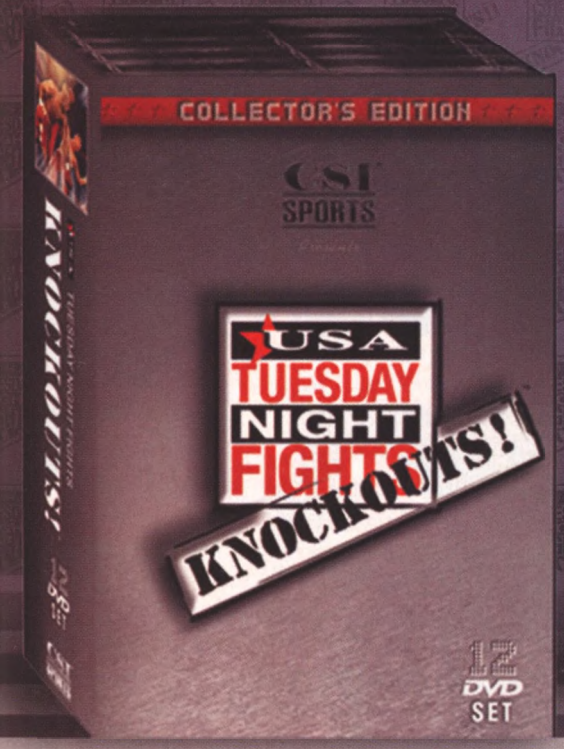

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DOES THE LOSER HAVE THE GREATER UPSIDE?

In a heavyweight bout that did little to change the status quo, Klitschko controlled much of the fight with his left jab (opposite), but also suffered three knockdowns (below) before prevailing by a close but unanimous 12-round decision at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall.

By William Dettloff
PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

When you look at it from a distance, this boxing business is pretty simply set up, in terms of deciding who moves up the ladder and who doesn't, especially in today's market: The guy who wins advances. The other guy doesn't. It's like a giant round robin; one guy moves up, the other falls out. Simple. We like it this way. It's clean. It's why we hate draws.

Oh, a guy doesn't disappear altogether just because he loses a fight. But he drops down a few rungs. Most do anyway, unless they perform really well in losing. And of course, there are all kinds of shenanigans that go on, hanky-panky with promoters and sanctioning bodies and whatnot that complicate things and give the game that bad smell you've gotten so used to by now that you don't even notice it anymore. But generally it's pretty straightforward: win or lose, stay or go.

Wladimir Klitschko's win over Sam Peter in Atlantic City in September, when viewed from the same distance, serves the model well by advancing Klitschko's cause considerably, while stalling Peter's. But there may be reason to suspect that while Klitschko won the battle, Peter may win the war. Sometimes it works out that way.

Don't go by the numbers. CompuBox says Klitschko more than doubled Peter's connected punches total, 204 to 100, and the three judges said that he won by scores of 114-111 despite having been floored three times. And you can't argue with the decision.

Essentially, Klitschko, 45-3 (40), won about every round except the ones in which he was dropped. Hell, we were probably into the third round before Peter even landed a

Klitschko went down twice in the fifth round after Peter landed a clubbing overhand right to the back of his head, but trainer Emanuel Steward claimed that his pupil was "bewildered more than hurt." Even so, the double decking gave the Nigerian a three-point spread in that round.

decent blow. So all in all, it was very nearly a dominating win for Klitschko. And as a result, he's up for an alphabet title shot at either Chris Byrd, whom he dominated in October 2000, or Lamon Brewster, who, of course, exhausted him into submission with a little help, according to the Klitschko camp, from the evil, grease-wielding genius of Joe Souza. So the model is sound. The alphabet titles are meaningless, but they'll make Klitschko and his guys a few extra bucks.

But boxing, like most things, looks considerably different up close as opposed to far away. A win isn't always a win. And a

Despite a badly swollen right eye, Peter never stopped charging forward in an attempt to land a fight-ending bomb. But exhaustion, a lack of experience, and Klitschko's jab-and-grab style prevented the crude swinger from accomplishing his goal.

Showing more spunk than in some of his previous fights, Klitschko survived a tough 10th round and came back to stagger Peter in the 12th with a jarring left hook. He could not, however, floor Peter, whose lack of upper body movement makes him a relatively easy target.

loss doesn't always mean a step backward. It depends on the fighters and the direction from which each was coming beforehand. Sometimes what's more important than who won and who lost is what each guy showed in the process.

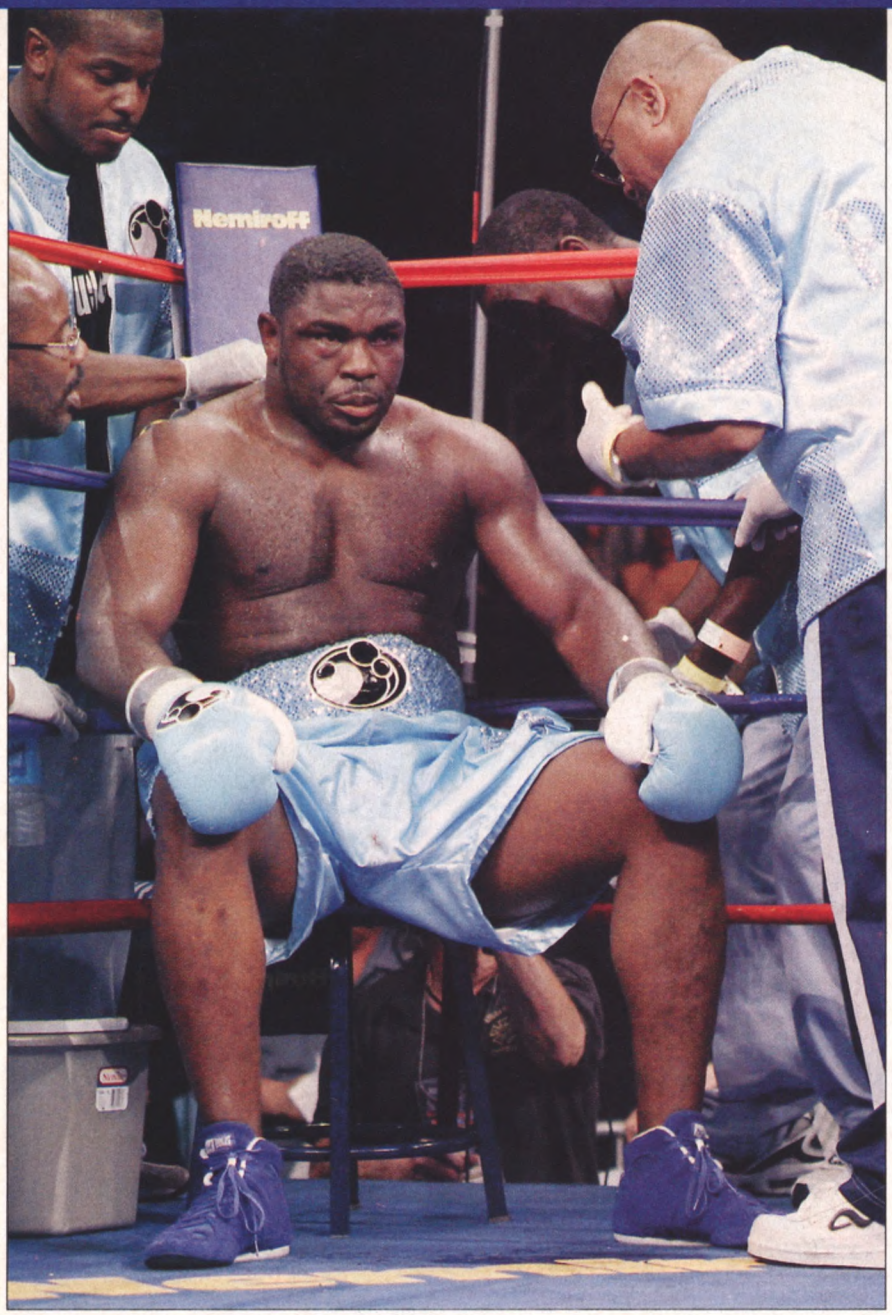
You could make a strong argument that despite the win, Klitschko did not help his cause in any meaningful way. Yes, he won. Yes, he beat a big, strong, hard-hitting, undefeated heavyweight. Just the kind of guy against whom you'd think his fragility would have cost him. He even did it over the distance, dispelling, for the time being at least, the universally held belief—due to his losing crashes against Ross Puritty and then Brewster—that no amount of training will make his wind what it should be.

It was, after all, a long, grueling fight and at the end he was the fresher guy. He even wobbled Peter with a hook in the last round. And you could forgive him for not going after him at the time: Peter, 24-1 (21), was still in there puffing and winging shots. Besides, Klitschko knew by then that he had it won. There was no sense in getting crazy. As the good doctor said afterward, "I got the feeling that he was pretty shaky. I knew I hurt him. But you always have to find the best position and not give your opponent any chances." Words to live by.

So there's all that good news. But when one considers where Klitschko was before Corrie Sanders hit him on the chin and ruined it for everybody, compared to what he looked like against Peter, there is little about which to celebrate. He was tight throughout. Tense. His strategy was principally to hit Peter on the outside with jabs and occasional straight rights, and to wrap him in a bearhug whenever Peter got within driving distance of him. It made for neither great action nor drama. That was provided, in spurts, by the times when he wasn't able to wrap Peter up fast enough. And here's where it got dicey.

An overhand right to the back of a teetering Klitschko's head dropped him in the fifth. A wild swing and a miss floored him later in the same round. And a clubbing combination topped off with a looping right to the chin sent him down again in the 10th.

It's hard to dismiss the gravity of those knockdowns—unless you're Klitschko or his trainer, Emanuel Steward. "I was really surprised when I got hurt," Klitschko said at the postfight press conference. "I wasn't prepared for those blows behind the head and that came from the back and the side." Steward parroted the line, saying he wasn't at all concerned about the fact that his charge had been dropped by what appeared to be very clumsy blows or, in the case of the second knockdown, the strenuous mussing up of nearby air molecules. His point seemed to be that since they weren't



Peter sits stoically as trainer Pop Anderson (far right) dispenses between-rounds advise. Peter's promoter, Dino Duva, said he would like to bring in a "sophisticated, experienced boxing advisor to supplement" Anderson and hopefully improve Peter's raw skills.

straight, conventional punches landed on the point of the chin, of course they would produce knockdowns.

"He was bewildered more than hurt," Steward said without a hint of irony. "I just told him in the corner to stay calm, and he was all right."

To some, that would seem the very problem. Klitschko panicked the first time he'd been hit cleanly. When a fighter is in a heightened state of anxiety, every brush with a glove is potentially fight-ending. It may be, as some very wise fight people have said, that Klitschko is a good heavyweight until he gets hit. Evidence suggests that is psychological. After all, he had a long and successful amateur background and tore through a lot of heavyweights until running into the incongruously heavy hands of Corrie Sanders. Now, it may simply be that his state of mind is such that he can't take a punch. Anxiety will do that to a fighter.

"It will destroy a fighters' performance," said Hall of Fame trainer and manager Gil Clancy. Clancy was working with Gerry Cooney in Cooney's fight against George Foreman when, Clancy says, Cooney suffered an anxiety attack after the first round and was knocked cold shortly thereafter. "He can't do any of the things he wants to do or that he trained to do."

Klitschko and Steward can deny what they wish, but it's clear to most observers that Klitschko, since the losses to Sanders and Brewster, is a ball of anxiety in the ring, his obvious skill and experience notwithstanding.

Contrast this with Peter, who, it must be said again, lost in wholly one-sided fashion if you forget the fifth and 10th rounds. They were the only rounds he clearly won. And he probably wouldn't have won even those if not for the fragility of Klitschko's jaw and psyche. He was outclassed for about every other second of the fight. The reasons were myriad.

He couldn't get past Klitschko's jab. He didn't go to the body. He didn't bend at the knees or even at the waist occasionally, a curious omission when you're fighting a guy who's several inches taller. He didn't jab enough—187 attempts with 26 connects. His head movement was almost nonexistent. He stood more or less straight up and tried to catch Klitschko with wide hooks and arcing overhand rights, each attempt of which could be seen coming from any point around the New Jersey shore. This all would explain his dismal 23 percent connect rate against a guy in Klitschko who couldn't move his head around if his neck were made of rubber.

So clearly, the population of fight fans that saw Peter as the next coming of Mike Tyson were wrong about him. He doesn't possess the young Tyson's speed, tenacity, athleticism, or explosiveness. He is, regrettably, not even Ike Ibeabuchi or David Tua, two heavyweight powerpunchers of recent note. A fairer comparison might be drawn to Ray Mercer. But even Mercer knew how to get low under a taller man's jab and bang home some right hands. Watch tape of his loss some time to Lennox Lewis. Still, there is room for hope for Peter.

"The fight showed he does need to revise things and make adjustments," Dino Duva, Peter's promoter, told THE RING. "He was out-strategized and out-planned. He wasn't as well-prepared as Klitschko was and wasn't able to adapt as well as Klitschko. It was a matter of preparation, and strategy, and handling different styles and being able to adapt. That's how Klitschko won the fight. Peter needed to be able to

adjust to what was happening in the ring and he didn't get any help doing that. There are some adjustments that need to be made in the corner if Peter is going to take it to the next level."

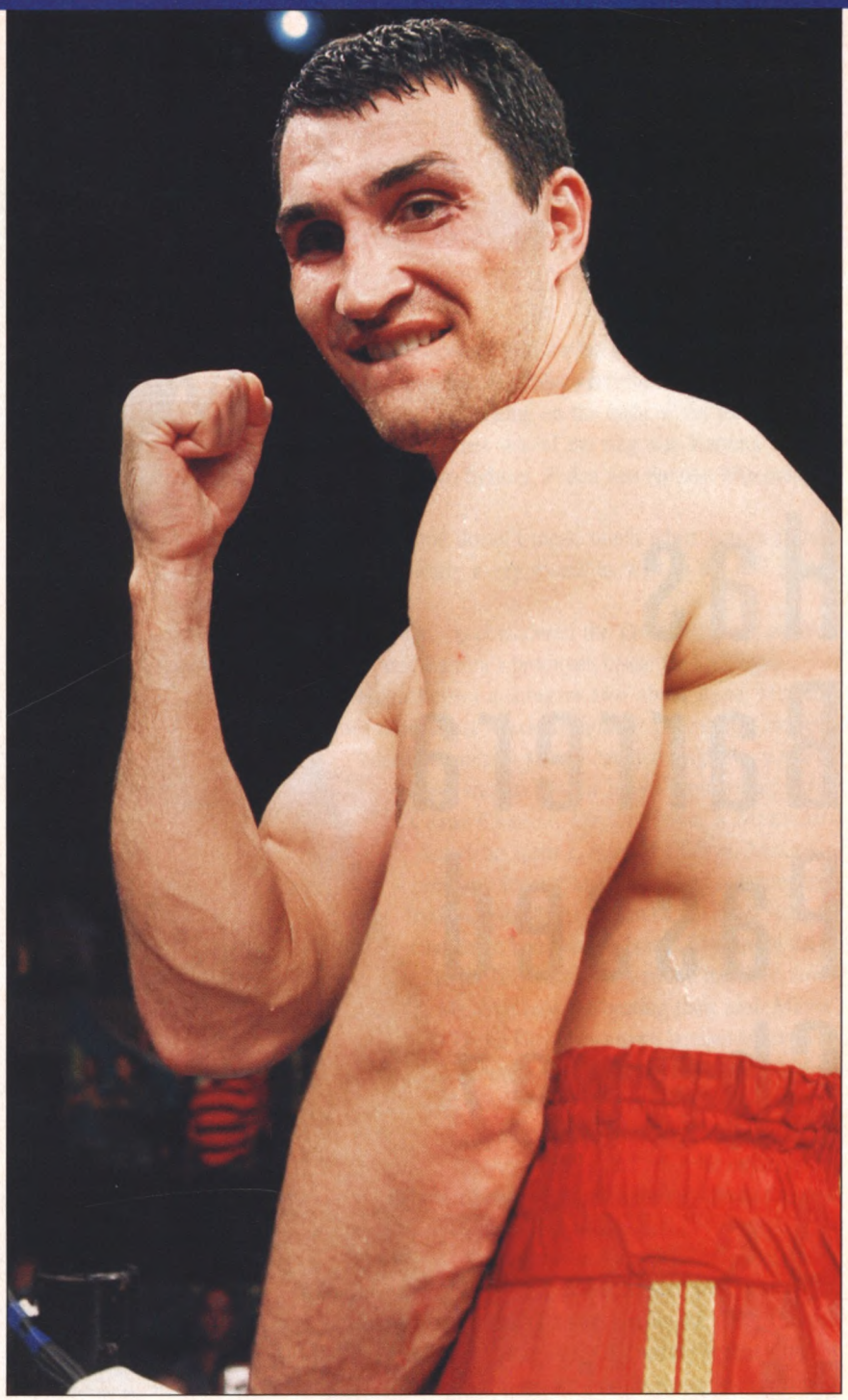
Duva's reaction won't come as a surprise to anyone who watched the fight on HBO and heard Peter's trainer, Andy "Pops" Anderson, instructing Peter simply to go to the body. It looked clear that whatever Peter should have been doing, he should have been doing it in training, not hearing about it for the first time during the fight, which is how it looked from outside the ropes. But a top-to-bottom training change isn't what Duva has in mind.

"Andy will always be there," Duva said. "He's a great guy, a very spiritual guy and a great trainer, and he and Samuel are very close. I'd just like to see another sophisticated, experienced boxing advisor supplement Pops and the rest of the team in the gym and in the corner."

Here's more good news if you're a Peter fan: Throughout the fight, Peter stood in there. He took a healthy amount of power-punches from Klitschko (75 overall) and never backed up. He fought the last half of the fight through a badly swollen right eye. He kept trying. Even in the final round, when Klitschko buzzed him good, Peter stayed in there, still trying, but was just in over his head against a guy who was too big and too experienced for him at this stage in his career. So it wasn't a lack of desire or grit that betrayed Peter, but a lack of seasoning.

"I don't think he had the experience he needed to fight that kind of opponent," said Clancy. "But Peter's on the way up, while Klitschko's already a veteran fighter. He does have more of an upside if he continues to improve."

Being green is no sin. You treat it with fights against good opposition. If Peter's promotional and management teams are serious about his development, they'll bring him back against guys who can fight. Not against guys to make him look good so they can maneuver into a title shot, but guys who will wear some of that green off of him. Duva says they'll bring him back against a lower-echelon guy to get him back in the ring, and then go right after the top guys again. "Peter doesn't need to be babied and he doesn't want to be babied," Duva said. "If he refines his skills, he'll be ready for anyone."



A happy Klitschko celebrates his hard-earned victory over Peter. Although it was his best performance in some time, Klitschko still seemed very vulnerable and only marginally improved his standing among the heavyweight hierarchy.

Klitschko? What can he do? He worked out some of his demons by getting off the canvas and keeping his head together and staying in the fight. That was an improvement. But he may be damaged forever. Even if he looked better the longer the fight went and almost looked like his old self in the final round or two, the cat is out of the bag. If you can reach him with a hard shot, make him think of the nightmare against Sanders, or maybe the one against Brewster, he could fold. He almost did against Peter.

Peter? Maybe he doesn't improve. Maybe this is as good as he gets. But he's only 25 years old, for crying out loud. He's got a long way to go. And we know now that he'll be in there for as long as it takes. He's crude, but willing. Which guy would *you* rather face? ■

WHO'S REALLY NUMBER ONE?

Has Barrera Passed Chavez As Mexico's All-Time Best?

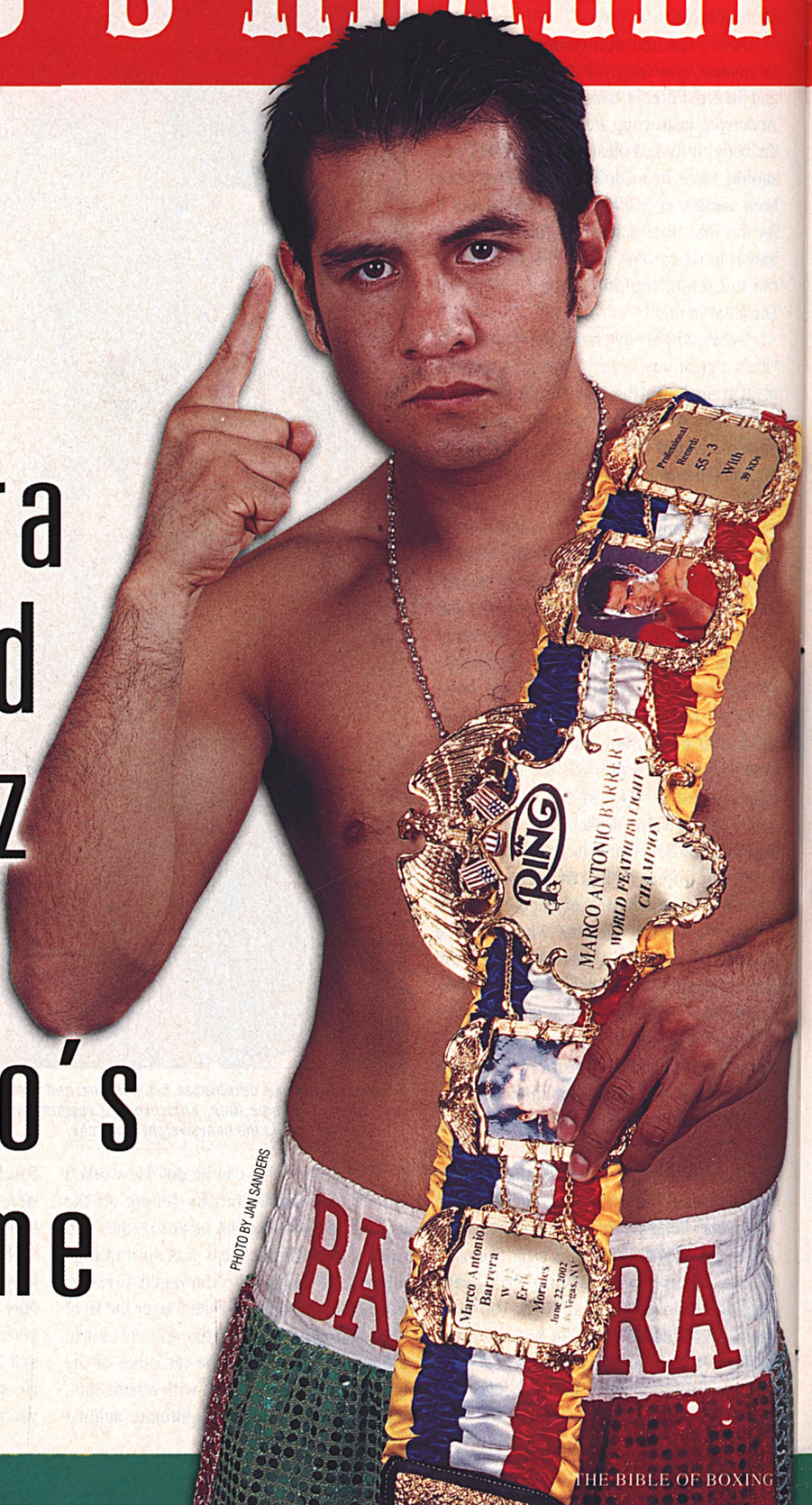


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

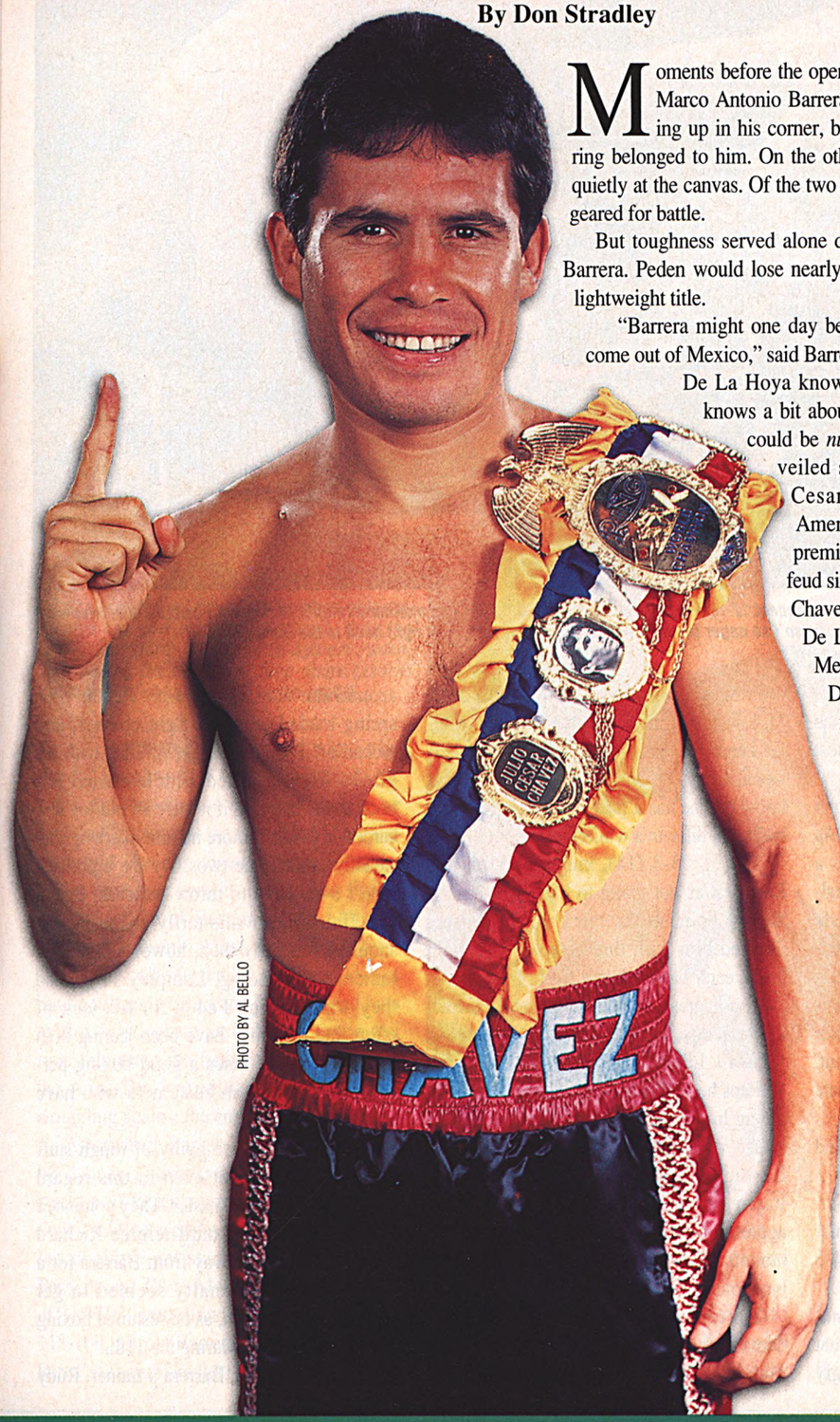


PHOTO BY AL BELLO

By Don Stradley

Moments before the opening bell for his September 17 bout with Marco Antonio Barrera, Australia's Robbie Peden was loosening up in his corner, bouncing on the balls of his feet as if the ring belonged to him. On the other side of the ring was Barrera, staring quietly at the canvas. Of the two fighters, Peden was the one who seemed geared for battle.

But toughness served alone doesn't mean much when you're facing Barrera. Peden would lose nearly every round, as well as the IBF junior lightweight title.

"Barrera might one day be considered the greatest fighter to ever come out of Mexico," said Barrera's promoter, Oscar De La Hoya.

De La Hoya knows a thing or two about hype. He also knows a bit about Mexican fighters. Saying that Barrera could be *numero uno* in Mexico might be a thinly veiled shot at De La Hoya's old rival, Julio Cesar Chavez. De La Hoya, a Mexican-American from L.A., and Chavez, Mexico's premiere boxing icon, have had a simmering feud since the 1990s, when De La Hoya stopped Chavez in consecutive bouts. Ever since then, De La Hoya has felt a subtle backlash from Mexican fans for beating their idol. Maybe De La Hoya has grown beyond his need to impress native Mexicans, but as soon as Golden Boy Promotions was formed, De La Hoya signed Barrera. De La Hoya knows that whoever controls the best Mexican fighter controls the vast Mexican audience.

Early in Barrera's career, he was a relentless left hooker who beat opponents down just as the great Chavez once did. Of course, at that time, it was too soon to make such comparisons. By now, however, Barrera has been around long enough that reasonable comparisons can be made. HBO's Jim Lampley estimates he's followed both fighters closely enough to form an opinion.

"Match them at 126 or 130, and I'd pick Barrera," said Lampley. "Chavez had a tremendous chin, a good punch, an indomitable spirit. But Barrera has the greater boxing ability, the faster hands. He's smarter, more versatile. Chavez was unbelievably great, but

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Although he failed to score a knockout, Barrera's recent 12-round decision over Robbie Peden was another example of Barrera's virtuosity between the ropes. Peden, normally an aggressive fighter, wasn't so eager to mix it up after sampling Barrera's right hand in the early going.

Barrera's dossier is more impressive. I don't think anyone in the last 20 years can match what he's done as far as meeting the best fighters."

Would Barrera's ring smarts be enough to hold Chavez off for all 12 rounds? As Meldrick Taylor learned, Chavez was a pick-and-shovel fighter who would gradually gore the guts out of you. No one was safe from Chavez, not even during the final seconds of a fight. Chavez may have been lucky to get a draw with Pernell Whitaker, but he still rattled the larger, faster Whitaker in the last round of their controversial bout. Might Barrera be susceptible to Chavez' late round heat?

"The Barrera of 2005 is too smart," said Lampley.

Lampley, who described Barrera as combining the inventiveness of a master painter with the focus of a Formula One driver, also rates Barrera above Chavez as a person.

"Chavez was surly, sarcastic, and standoffish," said Lampley. "Barrera is somewhat guarded, but warm. Except for some ugly moments during his series with Erik Morales, he's always polite and dignified. He keeps his personal life out of his professional life. He's mastered all of it. I don't know that he has a flaw, except for having a bad night once in a while."

Peden, 25-3 (14), knew early on that Barrera was not going to have a bad night. At one point in the third round, Barrera clocked him with three consecutive right leads, each blow landing flush. Peden, usually an aggressive fighter, seemed reluctant to mix it up, choosing instead to hop around with his left hand down near his waist. Perhaps he was trying to confuse Barrera by giving him a different look, but the best he could do was draw some blood over Barrera's left eyebrow in the fourth. Inspired by the blood, Peden showed more aggression in the fifth, but Barrera backed him off and started scoring with bright combinations.

Barrera gave the Las Vegas fans a demonstration of ring generalship during rounds six through eight. Moving lightly around the ring, Barrera hit Peden with spring-loaded jabs and right crosses, and picked off Peden's meager offense with his gloves. He dispensed with his usual left hook to the body, as if it were an old toy discarded in favor of more mature interests, and steadily landed one-twos. By the eighth he didn't even have to throw punches; Peden was flinching involuntarily at the merest shoulder feint. By then, however, the customers were booing. Lampley suggested they were booing Peden for his lack of effort, but they may have been jeering both fighters—no one hates a good boxing performance more than customers who have paid to see a brawl.

Both fighters were guilty of rough stuff during the ninth, but even in this regard Barrera was Peden's master. They continued fouling in the 10th, until referee Richard Steele took a point away from Barrera for a low punch. The penalty seemed to get Barrera back on track, as he resumed boxing and schooled Peden during the 11th.

Prior to the 12th, Barrera's trainer, Rudy

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Originally a typical face-first Mexican slugger, Barrera has now mastered his craft. Note the near-perfect form he displayed against Peden, first landing the left jab at long range (above) and then the left hook on the inside (right).

Perez, instructed Barrera to "close the show." Barrera, 61-4 (42), understands his value as a showman as well as a boxer, so he replaced his somber visage with a snarl and came out slashing away with both hands. Peden remained upright, but he was finally getting a taste of Barrera's heavy fire. A five-punch combination capped off by a short left hook sent Peden reeling sideways into the ropes, causing the MGM Grand fans to finally stand up and cheer. During the final minute of the fight, it was all Barrera; the Australian looked like a drowning man struggling against the current.

Afterward, Barrera told reporters that he'd been cautious in the early rounds because of Peden's reputation as a puncher. Peden said he regretted not going for broke, but couldn't get started. Judges Michael Pernick and Dave Moretti turned in scores of 118-108, while John Keane saw things at 118-109, all for Barrera. According to THE RING's championship policy, the junior lightweight title is still vacant, but Barrera now wears the WBC and IBF 130-pound belts.

Earlier this year Barrera needed only two rounds to stop the overmatched Mzonke Fana, but whipping Peden over 12 was far more impressive. Some will complain that Fana and Peden are not in the elite class, but it's reasonable for Barrera, who has had many tough fights in recent years, to fight a couple of easier marks. Even so, these easier fights should not be on pay-per-view, but

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Although he has a very good chin, Barrera has also developed into an outstanding defensive fighter. Here he blocks a right from Peden with his left forearm while also firing a counter right. It is Barrera's defensive ability that has helped him pull ahead of countryman Erik Morales in the pound-for-pound standings.

Golden Boy Promotions' honcho De La Hoya has been quoted as saying, "You should have to pay to see a legend fight." Lampley believes anything with Barrera's name, regardless of his opponent, will draw good numbers, even on pay-per-view.

Lampley and De La Hoya may be looking at life through Barrera-colored glasses. Not everyone is happy about paying to see Barrera take batting practice against Peden and Fana. Others recall his losses to Junior Jones and Pacquiao, and aren't ready to deify him just yet. Bernardo Osuna, Telefutura's *Solo Boxeo* commentator, feels Barrera needs to make bigger statements at this point in his journey.

"People don't want to see him against sub-par opposition. He's used up all of his tune-ups by now. He needs some blockbusters," said Osuna.

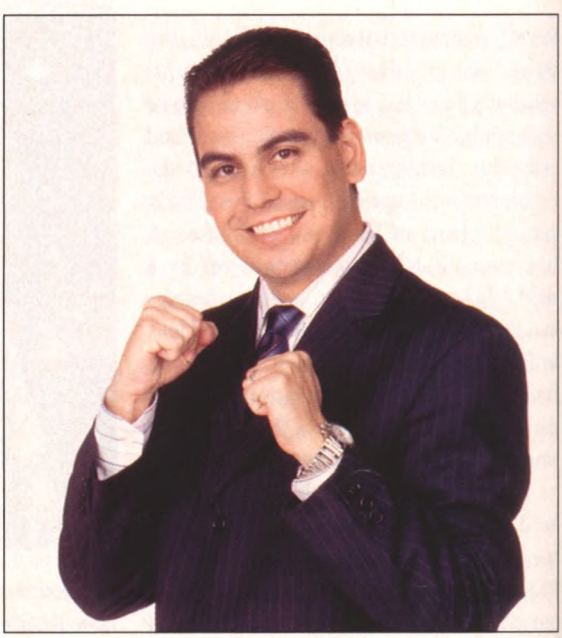
As for the Chavez-Barrera comparison, Osuna preferred the elder fighter.

"Chavez is Chavez. It's like asking if Kobe Bryant is the next Jordan. There will never be another Jordan, and there will never be another Chavez. Barrera is charismatic in a quiet way. He has done a lot in boxing, he had his memorable brawls, he's come back from defeats, and he knows how to reinvent himself. That's the beauty of Barrera."

Where Barrera comes up short, Osuna said, is in his ability to bond with fans. Fighting in Las Vegas, where the front row is usually filled with middle-aged women sipping exotic drinks and second-tier celebrities chatting on cell phones, is good for Barrera's bank account, but it may have taken him away from his countrymen. Except for a quick kayo win over Luiz Freitas in 2000, Barrera has not fought in Mexico since Bill Clinton was President and Selena was alive. Twelve years to be exact. Even during his prime, Chavez took frequent easy bouts in Mexico, just to soak in the cheers. That, according to Osuna, may be the difference.

"People will always love Chavez, even if he's lost some of his luster by hanging around too long. They respect Barrera, but Chavez stirred their emotions."

Chavez was a throwback to another great Mexican champion, Ruben Olivares. "Rock-a-bye Ruben" was the sort of fighter you'd see getting drunk with locals just a few days prior to a fight, and then carried off on their shoulders after he'd won. In 1993, Chavez drew



***Solo Boxeo* broadcaster Bernardo Osuna thinks that the one area in which Barrera falls short of Chavez is the way Mexican fans feel about him. According to Osuna, while Barrera is respected and admired, Chavez is beloved, especially for his man-of-the-people persona.**

132,000 people to watch him fight Greg Haugen at Azteca Stadium. Osuna doubts the introspective Barrera could match that, although he feels a fourth bout with Morales might draw 90,000 if they met at a similar venue.

Another reason Chavez rose to such heights in Mexico was that he didn't have to share the Mexican audience with another fighter. It was Barrera's strange luck to came along at the same time as Morales, and the two have had to share the spotlight in the post-Chavez era. In some ways, Morales' achievements are superior to Barrera's. He has never been kayoed, and he's defeated Jones and Pacquiao, the only men to beat Barrera. Morales has even stayed closer to his roots, fighting far more often in Mexico. But against each other, Barrera has an edge, hence his current place in the mythical race for south of the border supremacy. Morales' recent loss to Zahir Raheem has caused him to slip another notch below Barrera, but Osuna thinks Morales' more personable nature may make him a rooting favorite should he and Barrera meet again.

Chavez had no Morales to compete with. His rivalries were usually with American or Puerto Rican fighters. He was Mexico's sole warrior king, and his relationship with his fans was something nearly religious.

"Fans had a soccer-fever passion for Chavez. You only see a fighter like that once in every generation," said Osuna.

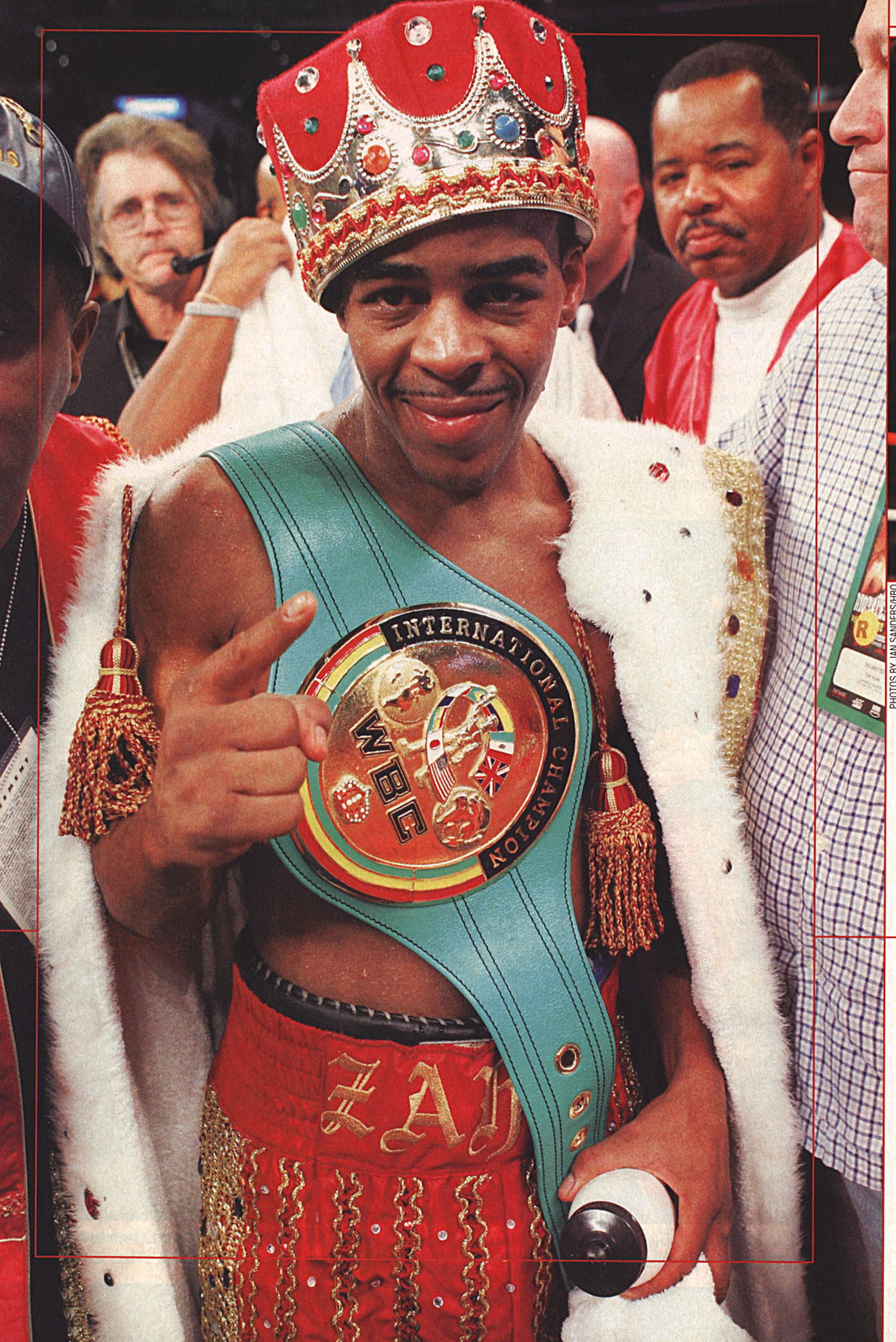
The downside to massive hero worship is that it seems to have made Chavez an addict, unable to walk away from the sport. The same night Barrera defeated Peden, Chavez was in Phoenix, Arizona, quitting on his stool against an unknown clubfighter named Grover Wiley. Chavez' right hand was broken. He'd injured it in his previous fight, too, a decision win over a docile Ivan Robinson. The 43-year-old hands of Chavez can no longer hold up, but he hinted that he might fight again this winter. Adulation can be a dangerous drug, and Chavez can't seem to kick his habit.

Marco Antonio Barrera may or may not have had the stuff to beat Julio Cesar Chavez in the ring, and he might not inspire Chavez' nationalistic fervor. But he will have trumped Chavez in at least one regard if he bows out gracefully. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Rockport, Massachusetts, and a regular contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Millionaires' Row: Barrera poses with fellow Golden Boy Promotions executives Bernard Hopkins, Shane Mosley, and Oscar De La Hoya following the Peden victory. Barrera was the first major fighter De La Hoya's promotional company signed.



PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS/HBO

After 10 years of frustration, underdog Raheem (opposite page) is finally among boxing royalty after handing Morales a 12-round boxing lesson. But it wasn't just his slick boxing that earned Raheem a unanimous decision; he also tagged Morales with plenty of sharp punches (left).

King Raheem!

Beating Morales Washes Away A Decade Of Disappointment

By Don Stewart

After helping the Greeks conquer Troy, the ancient hero Odysseus embarked on what turned out to be a winding, perilous 10-year voyage back to his home of Ithaca. According to the poet Homer, the enraged gods did everything they could to knock him off-course.

Like Odysseus, Zahir Raheem had a seemingly easy journey in front of him 10 years ago. He was a cocky phenom on his way to the 1996 U.S. Olympics, a breathtaking talent out of North Philadelphia who had more than 200 amateur fights and just three losses.

But like so many sure things in the fight game, this can't-miss deal missed. To be more accurate, he missed the runaway and slammed straight into a mountain. In the second round of the Games, Raheem suffered a first-round kayo to Cuba's Arnaldo Mesa, throwing him drastically off-course.

Raheem turned pro in November of 1996 and spent nearly a decade trying to get to the top of the sport. He switched promoters, switched trainers. Moved to Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia, and Las Vegas,

among other places (his current cell phone number begins with a West Virginia area code). Somehow, no matter how many times he was ducked, no matter how many overmatched opponents he blew away for short money, Raheem still believed he had the goods. All he needed was a chance.

He finally got it September 10 against Erik Morales at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. The future Hall of Famer never knew what hit him as Raheem, unleashing years of stored up angst, pitched a near shutout in outpointing Morales over 12 rounds. Raheem's blazing hand speed and slick defensive reflexes left "El Terrible" looking, well, terrible. The fact that one judge gave Morales five rounds and another saw him winning four should be grounds for a Congressional investigation. The one-sided shocker mirrored Winky Wright's domination of Felix Trinidad earlier this year and has been compared to Pernell Whitaker's mastery of Julio Caesar Chavez on, ironically, September 10, 1993.

"It really hasn't hit me that I beat Morales yet," Raheem said. "Everywhere I go now people ask me for autographs. I say, 'Damn, I must be somebody.'"

As Raheem puts it, he's finally in a position of power. There are plenty of big names for him to fight at 135 pounds (where he met Morales), or 130 (where he plans to stay). He no longer feels the need to call out Marco Antonio Barrera, Manny Pacquiao, Diego Corrales, Jose Luis Castillo, or Morales. Now, they have to come to him.

Still, don't expect to see him in against anyone of Morales' caliber when he makes his likely return January 21 on the undercard of Morales-Pacquiao II, which will go on as planned despite Morales' setback. Top Rank could then put the 28-year-old Raheem, 27-1 (16), in against the winner or even the loser.

Another slap in the face? Raheem doesn't think so. After all, he's waited this long. What's a few more months?

"There's a lot more good things to come," he said. "My stock has risen. I'm not upset about the Morales-Pacquiao fight. If that's what my promoter wants to do, so be it. Nobody ever gave me anything. I've earned it. I earned my position. I've been in the game for a long time. Now I want to get my just worth. I'm not being cocky, I just want my just worth."

Cocky is a common adjective used to describe a then-19-year-old Raheem as the '96 Olympics approached. "He was a very, very cocky, egotistical kid, like Floyd Mayweather," manager Cameron Dunkin said. "But there was softness about him. He really felt like he couldn't be beat, he couldn't lose. When Mesa stopped him, he was shattered. He went home, he cried, and he went through a really bad time."

Raheem remembers being hassled for interviews and autographs shortly before fighting Mesa. He said those same people "parted like the Red Sea" as he walked away from the ring that day. The only face he spotted with any compassion was that of his mother, who had tears in her eyes.

"I felt like I let her down," Raheem said. "I felt terrible. I felt like I didn't want to live no more. I was on top of the world. I got into the Olympics and I lost. I felt like I was a failure."

Later that year, he was given tickets to a Philadelphia 76ers game. From the nosebleed section, he watched as Olympic teammate and fellow Philly native David Reid was honored at halftime for winning the gold in Atlanta. "He came home the hero," Raheem said. "It was just salt in the wound."

Raheem decided the only way to get over the Olympics was to seek redemption in the pro ranks. When Shelly Finkel, Lou Duva, and other big names in the business backed off, he called Dunkin, who was with Top Rank at the time. Dunkin convinced the brass at Top Rank that Raheem was worth the risk.

But through 11 pro fights, Raheem decided he was going nowhere fast. With its focus mostly on Latinos, Floyd Mayweather, and the West Coast, Top Rank struggled to move a black Philly fighter. Raheem wasn't fighting on TV, he wasn't fighting anyone of note, and he wasn't looking great.

Five of his first 11 opponents went the distance. In Raheem's seventh bout, Lionel Odom dropped him twice. Basically, he was developing a rep as a boring boxer with no power—and no heart.

"He wasn't going anywhere with Top Rank early in his career," Dunkin said. "He was a 126-pound kid in Philly. There were no opponents for him out there."

After Raheem left Top Rank, things

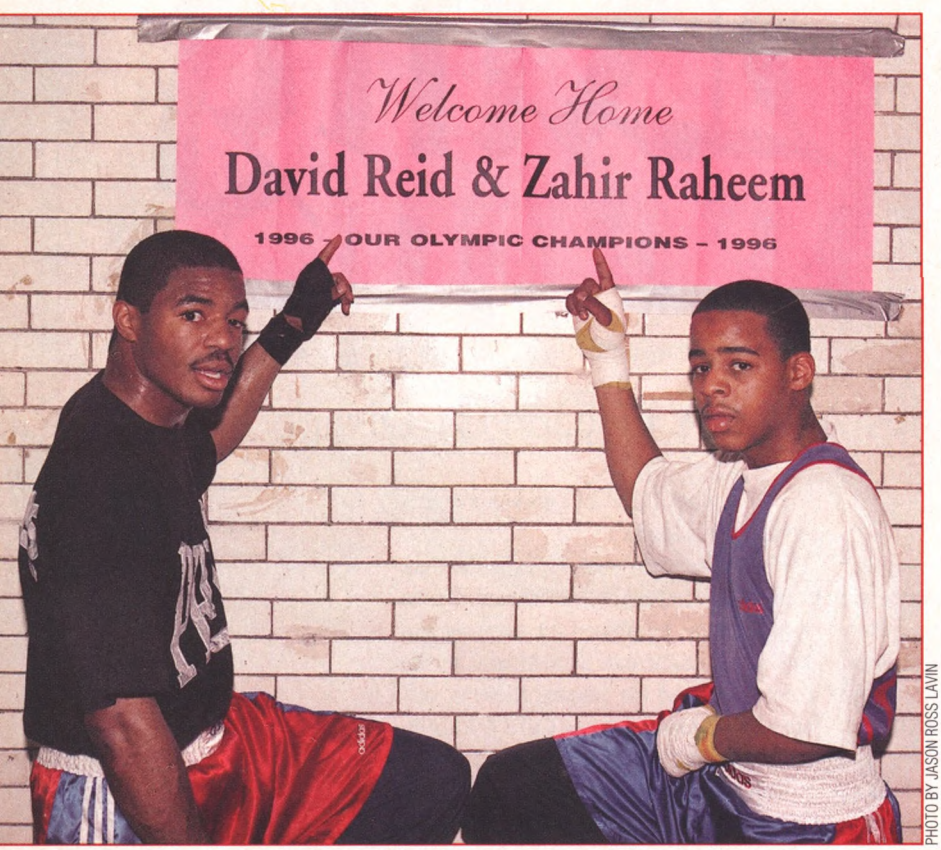


PHOTO BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

Raheem had high hopes going into the 1996 Olympics, but was stopped in his first bout of the Atlanta Games. To make matters worse, his teammate David Reid, who worked out of the same gym in Philadelphia, came home a hero with a gold medal.

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

It seemed as if Raheem had finally broken through when he fought Rocky Juarez in July 2004, but despite scoring well (above), he was penalized three points by referee Robert Gonzalez (right), who was heavily criticized by the media for allegedly favoring his fellow Texan.

managed to get worse. He stopped Shawn Powell in five rounds in September of 1998, then fought just four times over the next three years due to management squabbles.

As Raheem's career lingered, rumors began to surface that he was running the streets in Philadelphia. At one point, Dunkin, who was still in contact with Raheem, told the former Olympian that he wasn't hearing good things. Raheem laughed and said it was just talk.

"The Zahir that I know is the guy that I see out here getting ready to kick Morales' ass," Dunkin said. "I've never seen the Zahir that they talked about. I never saw that other kid."

"There was plenty of distractions," Raheem said of those days. "I knew so many people there. There were just … distractions. Cloudy head. I needed something different."

"He won't talk much about it," said Oklahoma-based promoter Tony Holden, who offered Raheem a contract in 2001. "He kept falling out of fights. Good fights. There was a lot of pressure going on outside the ring. It was affecting his ring skills, and he wouldn't take a fight unless he was 100 percent. He was missing opportunities."

If Raheem was in search of something different, he certainly found it shortly after signing with Holden. Raheem and a younger brother showed up at Holden's home in Tulsa after driving from Philly in a U-Haul truck. For a year, they lived with Holden and his family, doing chores around the house, dropping off the kids at

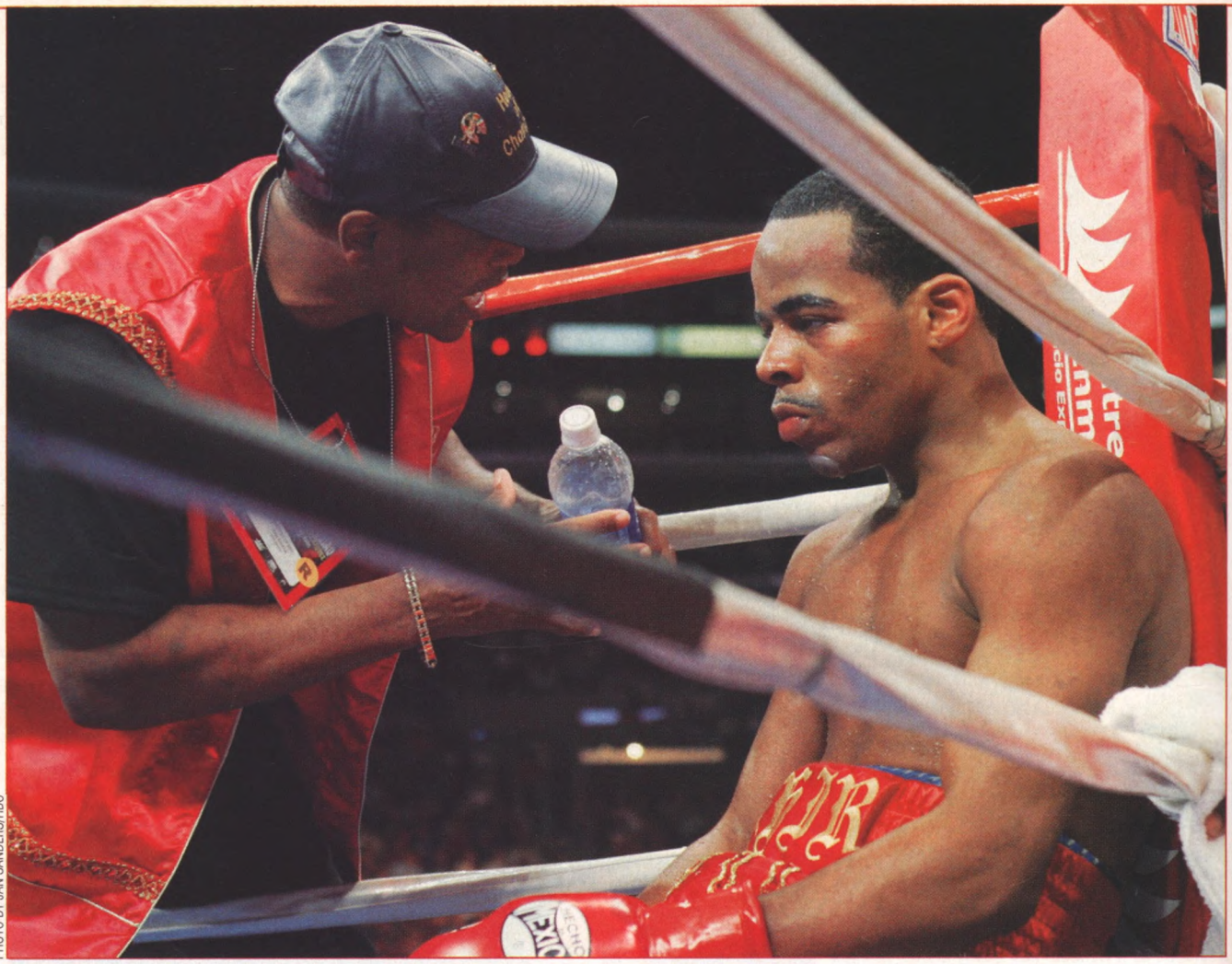


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS/HBO

Trainer Don House gives Raheem advice between rounds of the Morales fight. For this bout, House cut back on sparring, did lots of pad work, and had Raheem undergo an oxygen-chamber program at Desert Hyperbarics in Las Vegas. It all added up to a career-best victory.

football practice. Good thing the producers of *The Simple Life* didn't catch wind of it.

In Sooner country, Raheem found seclusion. Meanwhile, Holden found him opponents. Raheem fought 11 times within the next 2½ years, including ESPN2-televised kayos of Luisito Espinosa and Ablorh Sowah, and a lopsided 12-round win against Joe Morales on *ShoBox*. "He was one of the best-skilled fighters I ever came across," Holden said.

In July of 2004, Raheem landed what he thought was a big break in the form of an HBO *Boxing After Dark* showdown against featherweight prospect Rocky Juarez in Juarez' hometown of Houston. As it turned out, he didn't struggle as much with Juarez as he did with Texas referee Bobby Gonzalez.

Raheem, who got up from a fourth-round knockdown, was penalized points on three occasions for dubious infractions. Despite fighting at 126, his lowest weight in 2½ years, a drained Raheem outworked Juarez throughout the 12-round clash, but ended up losing the unanimous decision by two, four, and six points.

It was the first career loss for the Z-Man. Eventually, it worked to his benefit. The blemish was probably enough to convince Team Morales and Top Rank that Raheem was a safe pick to serve as a sacrificial lamb on the September 10 Staples Center show, which also featured Pacquiao's warm-up bout against Hector Velazquez.

"I was counted out," Raheem said. "Then the Morales fight popped up. That Juarez fight was probably the best thing that ever happened to me."

Immediately afterward, though, the proud Raheem was devastated. Holden lined up a *ShoBox* date a couple of months after the Juarez fight, but Raheem, whose contract with Holden had expired, decided to move on. The two have remained friends, however.

"He's a wonderful kid," said Holden, whose wife wept after watching Raheem beat Morales on HBO. "I have no bitterness at all that he's not with me. I'm pleased to death that he's finally going to go somewhere in the sport."

Raheem reunited with Dunkin, who shopped the promoter market before landing a deal with Top Rank last December. In February, Raheem returned with an untelevised sixth-round stoppage of Jose Quintana on the Miguel Cotto-DeMarcus Corley undercard in Puerto Rico.

Dunkin was focusing on moving Raheem into a WBC or WBO mandatory position when a bigger target appeared on the radar. "All of a sudden, one day they said they're looking for an opponent for Morales," Dunkin said. "I threw Zahir's name in there, thinking he didn't have a shot."

When Top Rank matchmaker Bruce Trampler told him that Raheem was a candidate, Dunkin began inventing fairy tales to make his fighter appear safe: Raheem's shot, he doesn't train, he has no heart, he'll fold like a beach chair when Morales tags him.

"Top Rank was nice enough to do it because they're not stupid," Dunkin said. "They knew it was a risky fight. Bruce Trampler told me several times that he was worried about the fight."

Raheem had moved to Vegas, where he was serving as a sparring partner for Kevin Kelley, Almazbek "Kid Diamond" Raiymkulov, and even a female fighter. But in the seven weeks that he had to prepare for Morales, Raheem only sparred nine days. Raheem said he wasn't given training expenses and couldn't afford to pay sparring partners.

But Don House, Raheem's new trainer, said he cut back on the sparring on purpose. Guys with more than 20 fights should know how to box, he said. Instead, House focused on conditioning and intense pad work. He also used an oxygen-chamber program developed by Dr. John Thompson, the medical director of Desert Hyperbarics in Las Vegas.

"Oh man, he wasn't even breathing coming back from that 12th round," House said. "We'll use Dr. Thompson forever."

Raheem entered the ring at the Staples Center wearing a crown and a king's robe. A slippery ad on the canvas caused him to slip several times, and late in the 11th his glove appeared to touch the floor after Morales landed his best shot of the night, a straight right to the head. Other than that, it was a performance worthy of a king.

Raheem, a 10-1 underdog, earned a career-high $225,000. With the win, he's lined himself up to earn much more. And it only took a shade under a decade, thanks to a devastating loss in the Olympics that threw him on a boxing Odyssey.

Now, finally, he can put Arnaldo Mesa and his mother's tears in Atlanta behind him.

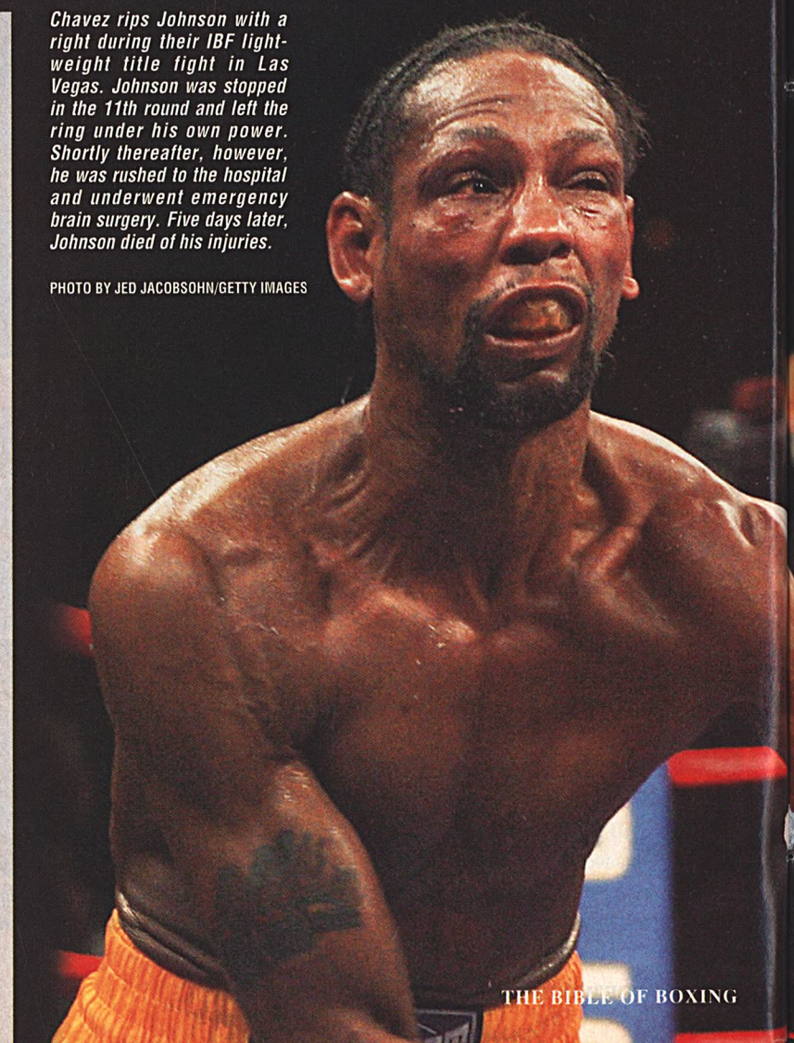
"To be honest with you," Raheem said, "I didn't get over it until I beat Morales." ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS/HBO

The quick-handed Raheem drives a right hand directly into Morales' face. "El Terrible" entered the bout a 10-1 favorite, but fought like the underdog. It was undoubtedly one of the biggest upsets of 2005 and has positioned Raheem for additional big-money bouts in 2006.

ANGUISHED CRIES AFTER JOHNSON DEATH



Chavez rips Johnson with a right during their IBF lightweight title fight in Las Vegas. Johnson was stopped in the 11th round and left the ring under his own power. Shortly thereafter, however, he was rushed to the hospital and underwent emergency brain surgery. Five days later, Johnson died of his injuries.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

By Don Stradley

Leavander Johnson was 35 years old, rickety for a lightweight, but ever since winning the IBF title in June of this year he looked forward to fighting the big names in the division and draping himself with alphabet belts. He was probably disappointed when he learned his first title defense would be against Jesus Chavez, a 130-pounder testing the altitude at 135. Still, it would be part of an HBO pay-per-view show, and it would take place at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Johnson hadn't fought there since beating Sharmba Mitchell 11 years earlier. Beating Chavez would be a nice way to revisit the place.

By 0:38 of the 11th round, however, Johnson was pinned against the ropes, taking hard blows to the head and body. The fight was stopped and awarded to Chavez. An hour or so later, Dr. William Smith of the University Medical Center would perform emergency surgery on Johnson to remove an enormous blood

"These Kids Trust Their Lives To Us And We Are Failing Them"

clot. Rumors would circulate that the clot was big enough to push Johnson's brain from one side of the skull to the other.

* * *

Ring fatalities, especially when televised, bring the grimmest aspect of boxing into focus. Our blinders are knocked off and we're shocked at what we see. We start recalling the sadder chapters of boxing folklore. We flash on a lonely fighter from South Korea named Duk Koo Kim writing, "Kill or Be Killed" on his hotel room mirror before charging out to die one afternoon in Nevada. We remember a thin boy named Johnny Owen taking fatal punishment at the Olympic Auditorium while Mexican fans howled their approval. We recall photos of Benny Paret slumping to the canvas like a bag of wet leaves.

Then come the bromides, the main chestnut being, "He had a warrior's spirit and died doing what he loved." Of course, the dead fighter couldn't have loved being pummeled, and the warrior label is hokum too. Prizefighters aren't warriors. They're more like hungry tramps fighting in a saloon for spare change. In fact, that's how Jack Dempsey got started. But boxing people need to put a positive spin on things. How else can we feel good when a guy ends up in a hospital with his head propped open like a tin can?

Another boxing banality is that fighters leave their anger outside the ring. Granted, fighters aren't usually angry at each other, but they're certainly angry about something, whether it's a bad contract, a terrible upbringing, or the fact that they have to sacrifice so much to be in this game. Sure, good fighters control their emotions, but fighters come from hard backgrounds. Anger is in their veins. An angry fist inside a padded glove can do unbelievable damage. This same anger also keeps you on your feet long after your brain has submitted.

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Chavez was pretty much in control after stunning Johnson with a left hook in the second round. A busy, swarming fighter, he punished the defending titleholder both on the inside (above) and at range (below) throughout the fight. Although not know as a devastating puncher, Chavez makes up for his lack of one-punch kayo power with sheer volume. Johnson was his 29th kayo victim in 45 bouts.

We have a vague idea of what causes a fighter's death. We know it has to do with tiny vessels bursting in the brain. According to Dr. Margaret Goodman of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, one punch or many can cause a subdural hematoma, or bleeding on the brain. Even

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

As the bout progressed and became more one-sided, members of the HBO broadcasting crew speculated that the fight should be stopped. Tragically, by the time it was, it was too late to save Johnson.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Although it never looked like Johnson was going to turn things in his favor, he never stopped trying and fought back with everything he had, including this flush right uppercut to Chavez' chin.

bodypunches play into it, since they make breathing difficult and create pressure within the brain. Dr. Goodman added that autopsies performed on fighters who die from a subdural often reveal that other brain injuries have occurred over time. Other factors include recent head injuries, even minor ones, alcohol use, medications such as aspirin, steroids, loss of reflexes caused by rapid weight loss, poor training, even badly fitted mouthguards.

Johnson seemed fine when the fight was over, but had trouble walking to his dressing room and complained of a headache. He was given oxygen, two IV units, and examined by Dr. Albert Capanna before being rushed to the UMC. Prior to the show, Dr. Goodman and the paramedic team had worked out an aggressive procedure that would get any injured fighter to the emergency room within five minutes. Unfortunately, Johnson's brain swelled during surgery, and he was placed in a drug-induced coma so the pressure on his brain could be relieved. A second clot was removed two days later. He showed some improvement, but gradually his body shut down.

Meanwhile, the search was on for a culpable party.

Boxing fans often feel guilty when a fighter is killed, so they try to assuage that guilt by blaming someone on the scene. Referee Tony Weeks' name was briefly bashed about, as was Johnson's corner. Stories differed regarding Johnson's behavior prior to the fight; some on the scene insist he was upbeat, but others, perhaps trying to drum up melodrama, described him as lethargic, even though he'd passed his prefight physical. But most of the hand-wringing was limited to boxing circles. When Paret died in 1962, it was as if the entire country went into mourning; in 2005, Johnson's story received only a brief Associated Press note in the next day's newspapers.

"It is odd, but I have gotten almost no calls, although I have read some nasty things on the Net," said Dr. Goodman. Indeed, the Internet hummed for days as self-righteous bloggers searched for a fall guy. As far as HBO commentator Jim Lampley is concerned, there are no convenient scapegoats.

"Tony Weeks did what 95 percent of all referees do," said Lampley. "He let the fight go on. There were no obvious moments where he could have stopped the fight. Unfortunately, if one person could be seen as being culpable, it might be Johnson's father, Bill Johnson, who could have stopped the fight sooner. But Bill Johnson did what most trainers do—he kept sending his fighter out there."

According to some sources, Bill Johnson threatened to stop the fight after the eighth round, although he later insisted his son was okay.

"All I know is my son was fighting bravely until the end. I thought he still

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Referee Tony Weeks finally rescues Johnson in the 11th round. Some have blamed the ref for what happened, but such finger-pointing is not only unfair to Weeks, it's an oversimplification of a highly complex problem.

had some chances. This was a world title fight, and he was fighting," the elder Johnson said.

Leavander Johnson took up boxing because it was a family thing. His dad was a trainer and his brothers were fighters. He was a New Jersey kid who fought most of his early bouts in Atlantic City. He had some ability, but by 2005 he'd fallen into journeyman status. Three times he challenged for major titles; three times he was stopped. He usually blamed referees for stopping the fights too soon. During his more candid moments, he admitted to taking these title fights lightly. He'd always been cocky that way. Still, he kept toiling away. He was a father, after all, and had four children to feed. Besides, boxing was his trade. Even when he wasn't training, he would help his father train younger fighters.

In June of 2005, he traveled to Milano, Italy, for one last title try. This time he was fighting Italy's Stefano Zoff for the vacant IBF title. Neither Johnson nor Zoff were even rated in THE RING's top 10, but the IBF's curious rating system featured these two aging fighters as the top contenders for its belt. Johnson stopped Zoff in seven rounds. After 16 years as a pro, Leavander Johnson finally won a title.

Middleweight champion Jermain Taylor knew Johnson. "After I won my title in July, I came to New York to meet the media and I also had a parade back home in Arkansas," Taylor said. "But my IBF championship belt was not going to be delivered in time for these events. Leavander graciously lent me his IBF belt, and he did so without a second thought. That was the type of man he was."

According to Lampley, "Johnson was a classic boxing story. Up from nothing, a product of poverty. He was a nice enough guy, a hit-and-get-hit type of fighter. There was no indication that fighting Jesus Chavez was anything out of the ordinary for him."

Chavez, 43-3 (30), is not a great fighter, but he's a good one. If you're not among the elite, he'll break your heart and leave you in the dust. He hurt Johnson badly with a left hook in the second round. For the rest of the fight Johnson fought like a spooked horse that had busted out of the barn and was galloping with no direction. He caught far more punches than he threw. By the 10th, the HBO broadcast team of Lampley, Emanuel Steward, and Larry Merchant all wondered aloud if Johnson's health was in danger.

Before Johnson's death, as he lay in guarded condition at UMC, an emotional Lampley mused, "He's a black male from one of the roughest areas in America. Without boxing, he's in prison. With boxing, he's been to Paris; he's seen the world. If he comes to a bad end, the little bit of money he made will go toward making his family comfortable. He always knew there was a risk. If he survives, and you ask him, I'm sure he'd tell you that boxing was the best thing in his life."

Leavander Johnson, 34-5-2 (26), with his family and fiancee at his bedside, died at 4:23 p.m., September 22.

It's been a bad year for boxing in Las Vegas.

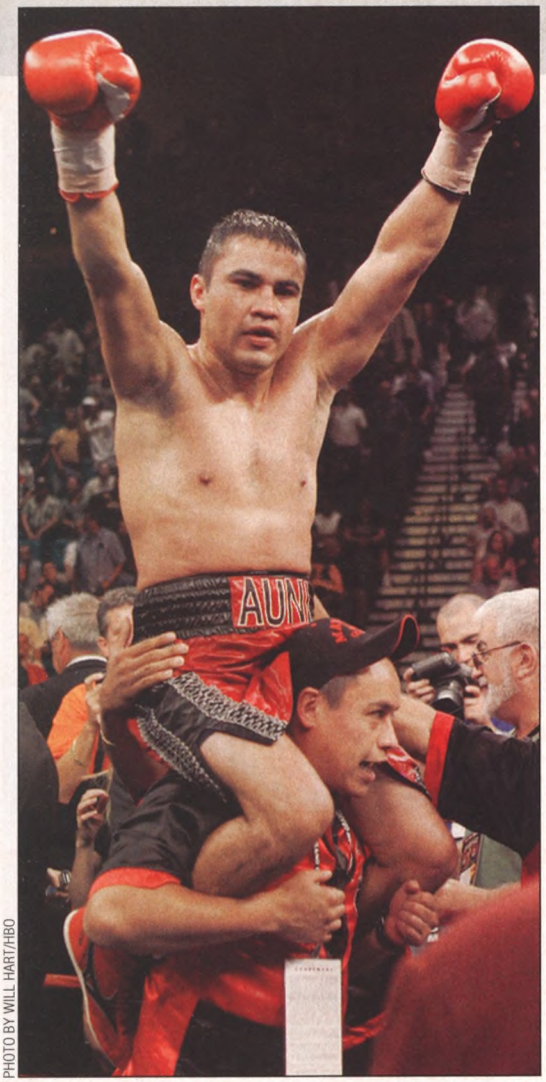


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Chavez had no idea that Johnson was so was so badly hurt when this photo was taken. Since Johnson's death, Chavez has pledged to donate a portion of his future purses to the deceased fighter's family.

Martin Sanchez, a 26-year-old super featherweight, died in July after a bout at The Orleans. William Abelyan and Leopoldo Gonzalez survived brain injuries during Las Vegas bouts, but will never fight again.

"Something is wrong," Dr. Goodman told the BBC. "I don't know what, but we need to re-evaluate the entire way we approach the testing and treatment of boxers. These kids trust their lives to us and we are failing them."

Within a week of Johnson's death, the NSAC formed an "Advisory Committee On Boxer Health And Safety," consisting of former commissioners, doctors, and local politicians. But committees are always formed in the wake of a boxing tragedy. Their efforts can be compared to trying to stop a bomb with mosquito netting. Shortening fights from 15 to 12 rounds didn't solve the problem. Prefight exams in Nevada are more thorough than ever, but won't prevent all ring fatalities. Quicker interventions by referees aren't foolproof; Johnson's problems could have started long before he seemed to be in trouble. Even winners aren't safe. In 2004, after winning a three-round amateur bout in the Philippines, Ryan Padrones complained of dizziness and died the following day. The cold truth could be that a fighter's safety can't be guaranteed.

As for Chavez, a fighter in his place can go in one of two directions. Ray Robinson kept fighting and winning after Jimmy Doyle died following their 1947 bout. But many fighters lose their taste for the business once their punches have killed an opponent. Gabe Ruelas' career crumbled after his bout with Jimmy Garcia; during one fight he claimed to see Garcia's ghost in the ring.

Chavez has promised to defend the IBF title with honor, and to donate a portion of whatever he earns as the IBF beltholder to a fund set up for Johnson's children by DiBella Entertainment.

"If I knew I could ever be going through all this, I probably would've thought twice before ever putting the gloves on," Chavez said.

* * *

Kill or be killed, wrote Duk-Koo Kim before his fatal fight with Ray Mancini. Those words were probably not what The Marquess of Queensberry, John Sholto Douglas, had in mind when he endorsed the rules of modern boxing in 1867. But as long as kids from poor families take up boxing in search of riches and fame, and as long as quitting is seen as some condemnable offense, Kim's words are probably thought of by more fighters than we in our living rooms would imagine. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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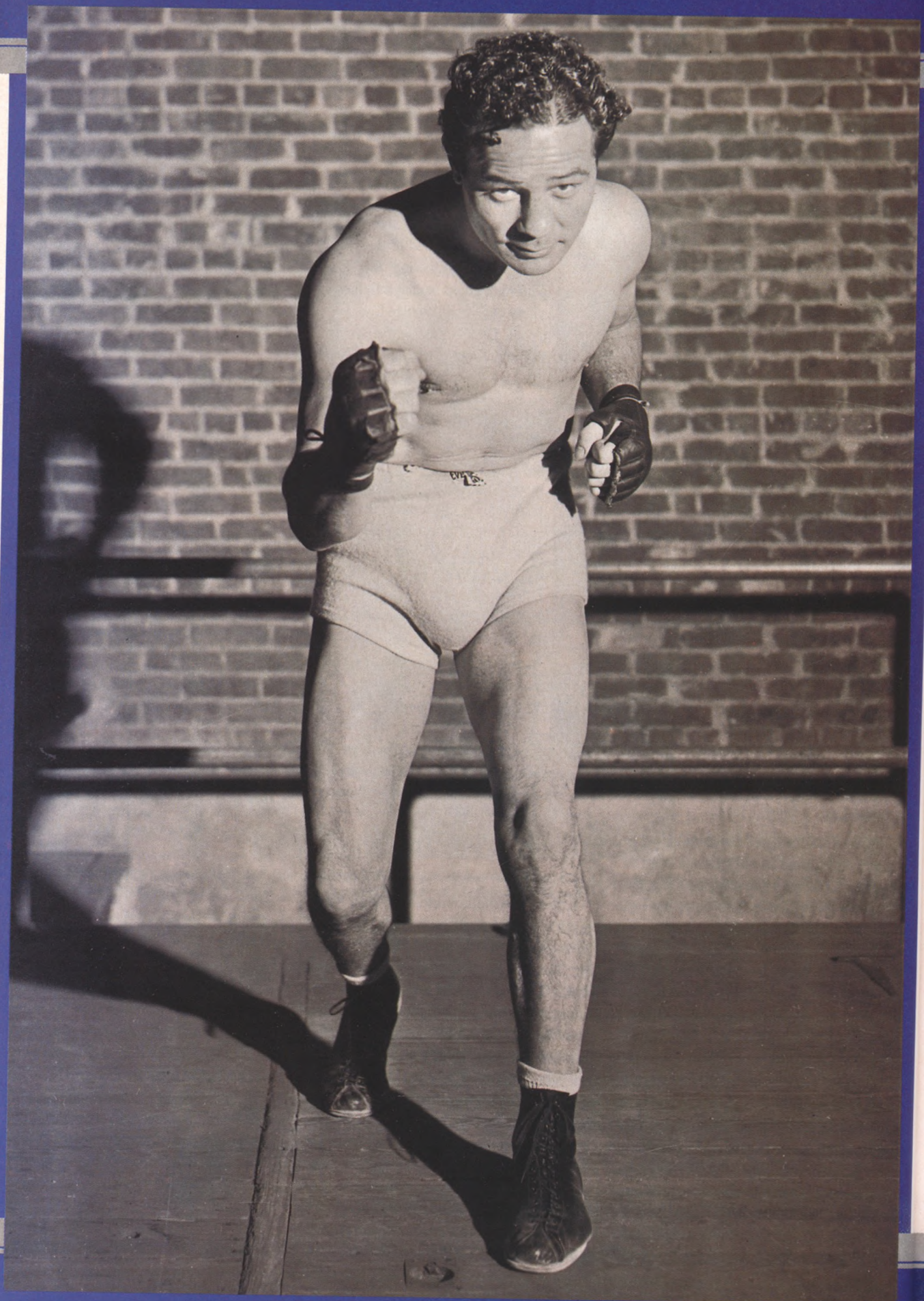


The Truth About MAX BAER

Cinderella Man's Fairy Tale Exposed

By Pete Ehrmann

A good Hollywood melodrama requires an arch-villain to make things dicey for the hero on the screen and clench the rear-ends in the movie-house seats. *Cinderella* had the wicked stepmother, and *Cinderella Man* has the wickedest mother to ever step into a boxing ring.

That, at any rate, is the complaint of Max Baer's family, fans, and many boxing historians about his portrayal in Oscar-winning director Ron Howard's film about the ascent of James J. Braddock from the welfare rolls to the heavyweight throne from which he toppled Baer in their 1935 title fight.

In the movie, the playboy boxer historically known as "Madcap Maxie" has been turned into a glowering "Mad Max," a loathsome, ill-mannered cretin whose fists of fury have fatally done in two opponents and threaten to do likewise to Cinderella Jim, and then go 2-0 versus the Braddocks by bedding his wife, Mae.

"You are far too pretty to be a widow," says smarmy Max (played by the deliciously malevolent Craig Bierko) to Mrs. Braddock (Renee Zellweger). "On second thought, maybe I can comfort you after he's gone."

According to people associated with *Cinderella Man*, the Tysonization of Max Baer was necessary to sharpen the contrast between him and mild-manner Braddock, and make the latter's challenge seem even more daunting.

Jim Braddock and Baer square off at the weigh-in for their heavyweight title bout. Unlike in* Cinderella Man, *it was challenger Braddock and his manager, Joe Gould, who created what* The New York Times *called "an atmosphere of unfriendliness and the momentary possibility of an outbreak."

"The script was written from the point of view of the Braddock family," Ron Howard spokeswoman Leslie Dart told New York *Daily News* gossipmongers George Rush and Joanna Malloy. "To them, Max Baer was a real threat. Ron felt that was how the character needed to be drafted."

Russell Crowe himself, the Academy Award-winning actor who plays Braddock, is quoted on the Web site contactmusic.com as saying, " … If Max Baer isn't frightening and capable, then we don't have much of a movie."

It's a hell of a movie, for sure, but taming their Baer down wouldn't have made it less so. It was, after all, the Great Depression, not Max Baer, that posed the biggest threat to Braddock. And it would've given *Cinderella Man* the realism it achieves in just almost every way except for its cartoonish depiction of the 14th modern heavyweight champion of the world.

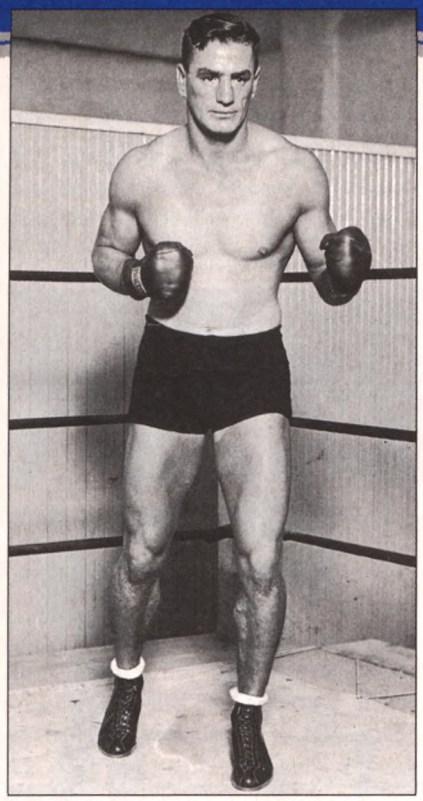
Boxing was theater to Baer, a roped stage upon which to strut the impressive physique he'd built up following his father into the steer-slaughtering business. But by his own cheerful reckoning, Baer's "million-dollar body" was offset by a "10-cent brain." Far from stupid, though, Baer just liked punchlines a lot more than punching, and his arrival in New York City in 1932 from California was like the end of a long drought for boxing writers lacking good copy since Jack Dempsey was long-counted out of the business.

Before Baer's Madison Square Garden debut against Ernie Schaaf on December 19, 1930, columnist W.O. McGeehan went into his dressing room and in answer to a question, Baer claimed that no punch could dent him because his head was harder than any substance known to science. To prove the point, he jumped up and banged his noggin against a radiator.

"There," he announced when the racket produced by the collision of two such powerful alloys had subsided, "if that couldn't daze me, what do you suppose I care about a wallop from a padded mitt?"

Baer lost a decision to Schaaf, but his fan club expanded. "Anyone whose brains aren't scrambled ought to be ashamed to say they like that Baer," grumbled promoter Mike Jacobs, who was reputed to have a heart as impregnable as the Baer cranium. "But how can you help it?"

It was his own wallop that worried Baer. Contrary to *Cinderella Man*, he never boasted of its homicidal power, but actually feared it—especially after he literally punched Frankie Campbell's brain loose inside his skull in their August 25, 1930, fight in San Francisco that ended Campbell's life. According to all available evidence, Baer was emotionally shattered by Campbell's death, and was haunted by it until his own dying

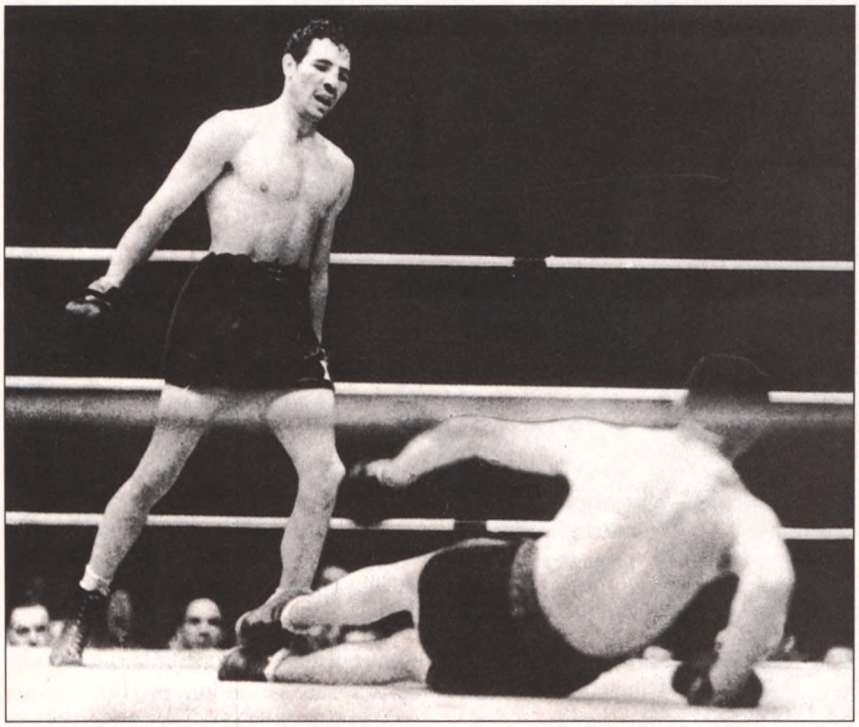


The August 1930 bout between Baer and Frankie Campbell (pictured) ended in tragedy when Campbell, who was knocked out in the fifth round, died of head injuries suffered in the fight. Unlike the calloused characterization of him in Cinderella Man, *Baer was haunted by Campbell's death throughout the rest of his life.*

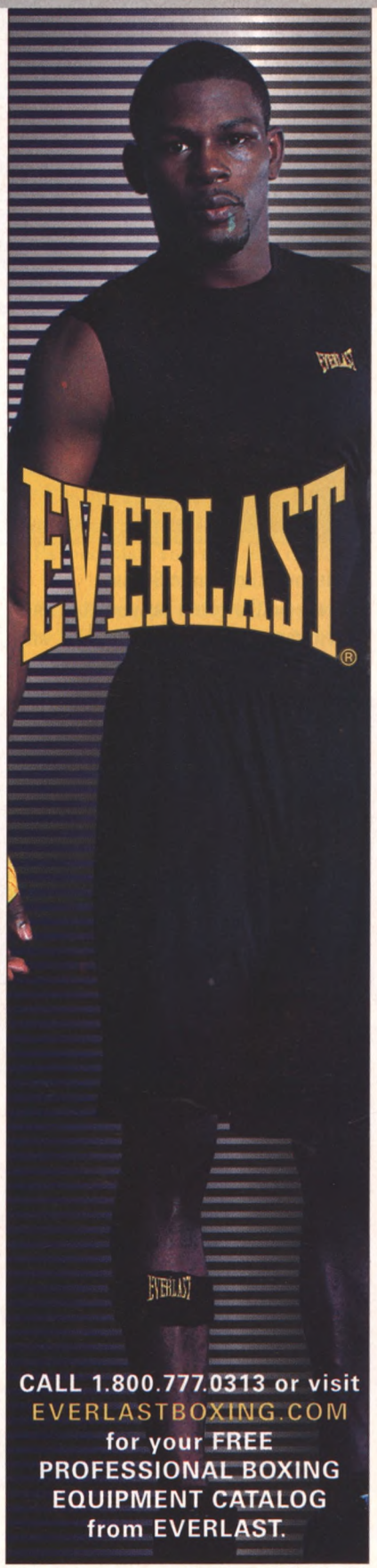
day. In fact, Baer paid for the college education of Campbell's children. His post-Campbell performances in the ring were erratic, indifferent, and often downright puzzling, and even in what is commonly regarded as his greatest fight, a 10th-round TKO of ex-champion Max Schmeling on June 8, 1933, Baer is said to have been prevented by the specter of Campbell from throwing the punch that would've flattened the German for the count.

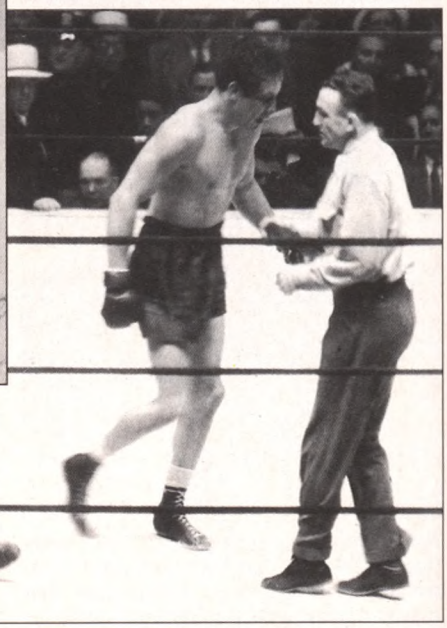
In *Cinderella Man* and on the TV talk shows where its stars hyped it, a second boxing death was attributed to Baer as if he wasn't just wantonly punching opponents to death, but also taking their scalps. It has even become conventional wisdom in boxing circles that Baer was responsible for the death of Schaaf, whom he knocked out in the final seconds of their rematch on August 31, 1932, notwithstanding that Ernie fought two more bouts—winning one—after that and before falling unconscious before Primo Carnera on February 10, 1933.

Further, the autopsy results on Schaaf disclosed that he was ill with flu going into the Carnera fight. No contemporary news accounts blamed Baer, and he certainly never went around demanding

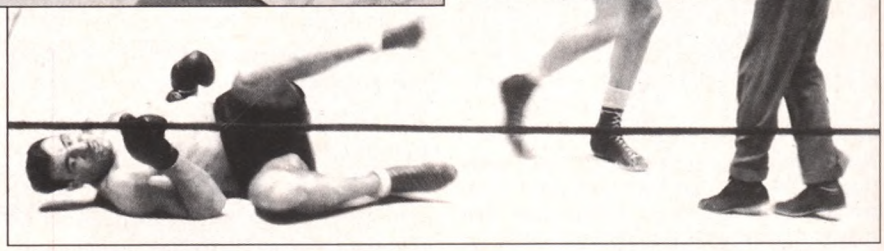


Baer's 1933 TKO of Max Schmeling is generally considered the finest performance of his career. It should be remembered that this was prior to Schmeling's knockout of Joe Louis. It was also Baer's final fight before winning the heavyweight title.





Primo Carnera suffers one of the 11 knockdowns he endured at Baer's hands (below) before the referee rescued the Italian giant in the 11th round. Carnera, who broke his ankle in the fight, was miffed that Baer teased him throughout the one-sided beating, but "Madcap Max" showed his tender side by visiting the man he dethroned in hospital (left).



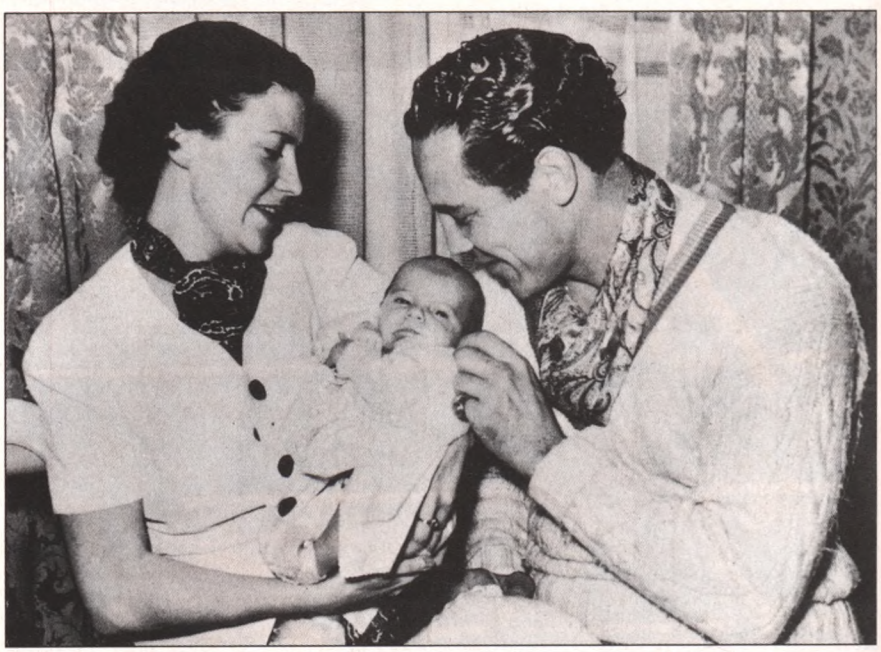
credit for killing Ernie Schaaf.

Baer did, however, say and do a lot of other bizarre things, to the point that when he entered the ring against Carnera on June 14, 1934, sportswriter Grantland Rice called him "the oddest challenger for the heavyweight title that ever came down the road."

After he won it by knocking the defending champion down 11 times before referee Arthur Donovan stopped it in the 11th round, a weeping Carnera called Baer a "big smart aleck" for teasing him throughout the fight. Baer also preened, postured, and carried on in a fashion that caused New York boxing commissioner Bill Brown to reiterate his considered assessment of the new heavyweight king as a "bum."

Sportswriter John Lardner preferred to think of Baer as merely "daffy." In fact, wrote Lardner, his "daffiness is his chief asset, next to the right hand punch which he fetches up from his ankles or loops from his hip … Part of the daffiness is manufactured and distributed for the benefit of the press. Part of it is genuine, a compound of freshness, comic confidence, and ham acting which can make Max Baer a tremendously popular champion or sour him completely with the public."

For some, the souring process started immediately. "That fellow is a menace," declared Frank Hugo after Baer won the title. "He trains on beer and wins the heavyweight championship of the world." Hugo was coach of the Syracuse University crew team, and had overheard one of his charges grumbling at the morning workout, "I don't believe in this strict training. Baer doesn't train, and he seems to do pretty good."



***His wife, Mary Ellen, shows Max his newborn son, Max Jr., who went on to fame as the character Jethro in the hit TV show* The Beverly Hillbillies. *Max Jr. is understandably upset by the way his father was portrayed in* Cinderella Man.**

Baer's ensuing inactivity in the ring certainly didn't endear him to fight fans, although in December 1935, he seriously proposed defending his title against contenders Art Lasky and Steve Hamas in 10-round bouts held five minutes apart on the same night. But he fought only

exhibitions until he stepped into the ring at the Madison Square Garden Bowl to face Braddock on June 13, 1935.

Among the challenger's well-known handicaps were chronically sore and mangled hands; but Baer's mitts were a mess too. Before the fight, his manager, Ancil Hoffman, got his counterpart in Braddock's corner, Joe Gould, to agree that both men could use all the tape they wanted in wrapping their hands instead of the regulation 18 inches.

Presumably, Hoffman was off seeing to that while Baer was in his dressing room before the fight in a sweaty clinch with someone who treated him a lot nicer than Braddock would.

"It was," Hoffman lamented more than once, "impossible for me to watch him all the time."

According to *Cinderella Man*, all the prefight bad behavior was on Baer's side. But it's a fact that at the weigh-in it was Braddock and Gould who coldly rebuffed Max's jaunty attempt to shake hands and caused what *The New York Times* called "an atmosphere of unfriendliness and the momentary possibility of an outbreak."

"I don't want to talk to you now," snapped Braddock. "I'll do my talking in the ring."

"So you're the one who kills people in the ring," sneered Gould. "Well, get out of here, you don't mean a thing to us."

Braddock's 15-round decision victory was unquestionably the biggest upset in heavyweight boxing since Corbett beat Sullivan in 1892. But it wasn't, contrary to the heated action depicted in *Cinderella Man*, a scintillating fight. In fact, wrote Henry McLemore of the United Press from ringside, had it been a club fight instead of a heavyweight title fight, the new champion's performance "would have caused him to be thrown out of the ring" and "wouldn't have earned [Braddock] the decision over half a dozen mediocre ringmen working the business today."

Baer was worse, of course. "Please believe me when I tell you that he didn't throw 10 genuine right hand punches in the entire 15 rounds," McLemore wrote, and then added: "I'll go even further than that—he didn't throw 10 genuine punches of any sort."

For all that, it was undeniably a Cinderella moment for Braddock, and boxing. *Milwaukee Journal* sports editor R.G. Lynch probably summed up the prevailing feeling best: "I'm glad Jimmy won the title. He's been a steady going guy and he's had hard sledding. The profits accruing to a champion will be better spent on his wife and three small children than tossed away on redheads, blondes, brunettes, flashy raiment, and nickel-plated automobiles. And fight followers can be sure that the champion will enter the ring in the right condition to defend his title."

But that doesn't make Baer as bad as his *Cinderella Man* evil twin. The Fraternal Order of Eagles didn't think so when, after Max's death in 1959, the international philanthropic organization inaugurated its Max Baer Heart Fund in honor of the popular ex-champion who was an Eagle.

And apparently Braddock, also an Eagle, didn't think so either, because for many years he served as honorary chairman of the fund named after the man he beat for the title, which to date has raised many millions of dollars for coronary research.

Would Baer himself have cared about being trashed in *Cinderella Man*? Probably not. Remember *The Harder They Fall*, the 1950s celluloid version of Budd Schulberg's novel by the same name? It's a fictionalized treatment of the Primo Carnera story, and in the movie the Max Baer character, "Buddy Stein," who brags about being a killer in the ring and otherwise behaves pretty much like the Max Baer character in *Cinderella Man*, was played by—Max Baer.

The greatest fear of those who knew the real Baer is that the *Cinderella Man* caricature will become the accepted template for how he is remembered. "All these people under age 50 are going to think my dad was a total pig," Max Baer Jr. told Jim Herron Zamora of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Maybe not, Jethro. After opening to great reviews and decent box office, *Cinderella Man* thoroughly tanked in the theaters. And then there's the thirty-something technician who fixed my microfilm reader as I was doing research for this piece at the Milwaukee Public Library. When he inquired about the subject of my work and I told him it was Max Baer, his face lit up.

"I'm not a big boxing fan, but Max Baer—what a party-boy!" he said admiringly.

Party on, Max. Your reputation is safe. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer from West Allis, Wisconsin, and a regular contributor to this magazine.

Late in his career, an aging Baer scored a first-round knockout of Pat Comiskey in what was then considered a startling upset. It also proved to be Max's final victory, as he retired following his next fight, an eighth-round TKO loss to Lou Nova.

New Faces

(Continued from page 22)

pushed him to excel. Now the junior featherweight wants more, and if it were up to him, he'd have it yesterday.

What the 5'6" 22-year-old currently has is a pristine 6-0 (2) pro record, a nice promotional contract with Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions, and a well-connected manager in Gary Gittelsohn. He has a strong work ethic, forged by his father, and a burning desire to be a star. Still, Garcia knows it's going to be hard work that gets him where he wants to go.

"I do enjoy training and fighting, I always have," Garcia said. "I feel that attitude came from my dad. I see my dad and how he's led his life. He loved to work. He wants to make something better for himself and he always worked, worked, worked. Even now, he gets up early in the morning and he's always doing something. When he's not working, he's cleaning up the house. If he sees any of us sleeping, he's waking us up, yelling 'There's no sleeping here; there is always something to do.' That's the way I fight. When I can't knock my guy out, I'm very disappointed. I figure I worked too hard not to knock him out."

De La Hoya can relate to Garcia. To some extent, "The Golden Boy" took a similar path, growing up poor in East Los Angeles, under a strong patriarchal figure in Joel De La Hoya. It didn't take long for De La Hoya to notice Garcia's work ethic and seething ambition.

"We're truly excited about Aaron Garcia; he's one of our kids who's demonstrated that he's ready to fight eight- and 10-rounders now," De La Hoya said. "He has the will to win and he has the experience, based on his amateur background. We're looking to bring him up fairly fast. I'd say faster in comparison to most young fighters today. I'd have no problem comparing him right now with [2004 United States Olympic gold medalist] Andre Ward as far as where Aaron's progression is. I see Garcia getting a title sometime in early-2007."

De La Hoya said he doesn't know much about Garcia's personal background, but has no difficulty seeing Garcia's glaring eagerness to succeed—*today*.

"I tell him to be very patient," De La Hoya explained. "Aaron is very willing and he's ready to step up and fight as often as we can put him in there. But there is a process of building up a career; you have to factor in experience and level of opposition. These fighters understand that and finally absorb and learn from it. Garcia is special. There are things about him that do remind me of myself when I was that young. He's so humble and quiet. I see that in him outside of the ring. But in the ring, he turns into this little Tasmanian Devil. He's very shy until he puts the gloves on, which is the way I was."

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

Garcia slams a right hand into the face of Javier Flores en route to a four-round decision victory in September 2005. Even though he's still a preliminary fighter, Garcia is eager to move up to bigger bouts as soon as possible.

Garcia can only hope for the same results as De La Hoya, a future Hall of Famer who's made millions of dollars from his ring exploits. In the meantime, Garcia keeps his past tucked away in his memory pocket, an easy reference tool if he ever lacks the incentive for a morning run or afternoon sparring session on a humid day. That motivation comes from a youth spent rarely seeing his parents—sometimes for weeks—because they had to work so hard just to provide the essentials.

"Mostly I remember just struggling like any Mexican family trying to make it," Garcia said. "We just had each other. I really don't remember too much about the holidays. I just remember hardly ever seeing my parents during those times. I remember we had a lot of babysitters. I think it made me a strong person. I'm thankful for everything now."

When Garcia hit the amateur circuit at eight years old, he exploded. By the time he reached 16, Garcia won his first national Golden Gloves championship in the 119-pound open division. Garcia then went deep into the 2000 and 2004 United States Olympic Trials, each time being selected as an alternate. However, his '04 experience left Garcia with a sour feeling.

"I felt I was robbed," said Garcia. "There were politics involved in the amateurs, and I felt I was good enough to make the Olympic team. I took six months off after the Olympic Trials in 2004 because I hate losing. I hate losing with a passion. I felt I worked too hard to get that far for nothing. The six months is the only time I ever took off from boxing. I thought a lot during those six months. I thought about quitting for good because I didn't reach my dream of being an Olympian. I wanted to make the Olympics more for my family than I did myself. I guess that's why I felt like I let my family down."

Though he's started his career fighting mostly at featherweight, Garcia says he can make the 122-pound class comfortably. He is a boxer-puncher who has a tendency to brawl unnecessarily.

"Overall, Aaron is a real good boxer with a lot of hand speed and good hand-eye coordination," said Jorge Padilla, Garcia's trainer since he was 12 years old. "But I am always working on defense with Aaron because he's very offensive-minded. I'd like to see him slip punches more and counter off that. His ability to take a punch isn't something I worry too much about."

Garcia's parents are still working, but their lives are easier these days. Most of their children are grown, some with children of their own. Now Aaron wears the mantle of family breadwinner, a responsibility he doesn't shirk. His ultimate desire is to earn enough money boxing so that they can retire.

"My family has worked all their lives," Garcia said. "It motivates me that I can do something about it now. All my life I've been carrying a lot of things on my shoulders. I just don't want my family working anymore, especially my mom and dad." ■

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SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Chris Byrd W 12 DaVarryl Williamson
(Retains IBF Title)
James Toney W 12 Dominick Guinn
Wladimir Klitschko W 12 Samuel Peter
Nicolay Valuev W 12 Larry Donald
Paolo Vidoz W 12 Michael Sprott
Lamon Brewster KO 9 Luan Krasniqi
Juan Carlos Gomez W 10 Oliver McCall
Shane Cameron KO 4 Adele Olakanye
Lance Whitaker KO 5 Gabe Brown
Brian Minto KO 7 Vincent Maddalone
Henry Akinwande KO 2 Tipton Walker
George Arias KO 2 Luiz Delmino
Sultan Ibragimov Tech. Win 9
Friday Ahunanya
Kali Meehan KO 3 Tommy Connelly

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Krzysztof Wlodarczyk KO 6
Hector Alfredo Avila
David Haye KO 2 Vincenzo Rossitto
Chad Van Sickle KO 3 Jeff Yeoman
Rogerio Lobo KO 2 Albertino Mota

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Antonio Tarver W 12 Roy Jones
(Retains World Title)
Tomasz Adamek KO 6 Thomas Ulrich
(Retains WBC Title)
Paul Briggs KO 5 Etienne Whitaker
Glen Johnson KO 10
George Khalid Jones
Prince Badi Ajamu KO 9 Olando Rivera
Adrian Diaconu KO 2 Conal MacPhee
Pita Domoni KO 7 Vitori Natawake

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Lucian Bute KO 8 Kabary Salem
Simeon Cover W 10 Dean Cockburn
Peter Mitrevski Jr. W 10
Yoshinori Nishizawa
Rudy Markussen KO 3 Mpush Makembi

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Arthur Abraham KO 5 Luis Daniel Parada
Scott Dann W 12 Wayne Elcock
Larry Sharpe W 10 Ali Nestor Charles
Kelly Pavlik KO 9 Fulgencio Zuniga
Cleveland Corder KO 3 Brent Cooper
Eiji Nakamura KO 5 Shingo Asatsu
Gareth Sutherland W 8 Claudio Ortiz
Andre Ward KO 1 Glenn LaPlante
Eduardo Mendoza KO 2 Nicolas Lucio
John Duddy KO 1 Joseph Brady

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Kassim Ouma KO 4 Freddie Cuevas
Kofi Jantuah W 10 Hicklet Lau
Rodney Jones D 12 Raul Frank
Sergio Martinez KO 2 Alvaro Gamboa
Zulfikar Joy Ali W 12 Garry Comer
Vanes Mariroysyan KO 1 Tony Morales
Jimmy Lange KO 4 Perry Ballard
James Moore KO 6 Hollister Elliott
Andre Berto KO 1 William Johnson
Hector Saldivia KO 2 Norberto Acosta
Daniel Geale KO 2 Steve Douet

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Flyweight Lorenzo Parra nails Takefumi Sakata with a left hook

WELTERWEIGHTS

Jose Luis Castillo KO 4 Diego Corrales
(Non-title bout)
Shane Mosley W 10 Jose Luis Cruz
Kermit Cintron KO 3 Francisco Parra
Kendall Holt W 12 Vladimir Khodokovski
Vince Phillips Tech. Win 5 Kelson Pinto
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 5 Jeremy Stiers
Ossie Duran W 12 Colin McNeil
Thomas Damgaard W 8 Bruno Sakabunda
Kevin Anderson W 12 Joshua Okine
Ben Tackie W 10 Norberto Bravo
Mike Siano KO 1 Joe McHenry
Sergio Aparicio KO 2 Andre Chatur
Felix Flores KO 12 Alejandro Juarez
DeMarcus Corley KO 9 Johnny Walker
Grover Wiley KO 5 Julio Cesar Chavez
Rustam Nugaev KO 6 Luis Antonio Arceo
Walter Diaz KO 1 Juan Godoy
Ulises Jimenez KO 2 Jorge Rodriguez

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Miguel Cotto KO 7 Ricardo Torres
Cesar Rene Cuenca W 10 Ivan Bustos
Herman Ngoudjo W 12 Emanuel Augustus
Jairo Ramirez W 10
Francisco Javier Olvera
Americo Santos KO 1 Jeremy Yelton
Henry Bruseles KO 4 Armando Cordoba
Sataporn Singwangcha W 12
Nonoy Gonzales
Jose Alfaro KO 7 Antonio Osorio
Demetrius Hopkins KO 9 Ernesto Zepeda
Miguel Callist KO 8 Luis Samudio
Kevin Onyango W 10 Michael Muya
Rock Allen KO 2 Candelaria Herrera
Lucas Matthysse KO 3
Marcelo Omar Lazarte
Marcos Maidana KO 3 Marcelo Miranda
Wilmer Gómez KO 3 Víctor Pérez
Sirimongkol Singwangcha W 8
Arniel Tinampay
Opeti Tagi KO 3 Semisi Qoro
Juan Arroyo W 8 Juan Polo Perez
Chad Brisson KO 4 Pedro Garcia

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Jesus Chavez KO 11 Leavander Johnson
(Wins IBF Title)
Nate Campbell KO 10
Almazbek Raiymkulov
Stevie Johnston W 8 James Crayton
Lakva Sim W 12 Ebo Elder
Javier Jauregui W 10 Randy Suico
Craig Docherty KO 7 John Mackay
Ameth Diaz KO 3 William Gonzalez
Alex De Jesus KO 5 Alejandro Pena
Santos Benavides KO 4 Noel Gomez
Denapha Bigshotcamp KO 5
Singsiam Eausampan
Martin Kristjansen KO 10
Anthony Tshehla

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Marco Antonio Barrera W 12 Robbie Peden
(Retains WBC Title; wins IBF Title)
Manuel Medina KO 5 Miguel Angel Galindo
Julio Chacon W 12 Julio Alganaraz
Bobby Pacquiao W 10 Carlos Hernandez
Ricardo Castillo KO 5 Phillip Payne
Lamont Pearson KO 6 Shamir Reyes
Gerardo Zayas W 10 Baudel Cardenas
Jun Paderna W 10 Rolly Laruan
Jose Manuel Lopez W 10 Jose Luis Tula
Abel Berrelleza KO 3 Bernardo Montes
Fernando Lizarraga KO 4 Guadalupe Arce
Jose Diaz W 8 Mario Lacey
Antonio Cermeno KO 1 Raul Barrios
Aldo Valtierra KO 5 Juan Manuel Matias

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Huberto Soto KO 1 Ulises Duarte
Julio Zarate W 10 Francisco Mateos
Robert Guerrero KO 1 Sammy Ventura
Jeffrey Mathebula W 12 Osumanu Akaba
Carlos Garcia W 10 Robinson Castellanos
Hugo Dianzo W 10 Fernando Beltran Jr.
Roinet Caballero KO 3 Danilo Baca
Carl Johanneson KO 9 Peter Allen

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Celestino Caballero W 12 Yober Ortega
Gabula Vabaza W 12 Anyetei Laryea
Wethya Sakmuangklang W 12
Yasuo Kunimi
Agapito Sanchez W 10 Edison Torres
Hector Julio Avila KO 9 Alejandro Heredia
Giovanni Andrade KO 5 Erich Franco
Somsak Sithchatchawal KO 6
Almaz Assanov
Lupillo Sanchez W 8 Sergio Lopez
Juan Lopez KO 1 Roberto Chacon
Nonito Donaire KO 1 Daniel Gonzalez
Ramon Torres KO 4
Esteban Gabriel Aranda

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Hozumi Hasegawa KO 7 Gerardo Martinez
(Retains WBA Title)
Ricardo Cordoba KO 5 Diego Martinez
Pablo Sepulveda W 12
Damian Marchiano
Sasha Bakhtin W 10 Masayoshi Tachiki
Vusi Malinga KO 10 Nkosinathi Tshinavhe
Chatchai Sasakul KO 12 Tata Polinar
Feliciano Ledesma W 10
Arnaldo Orrabalis
Junior Farzan Ali KO 2 Saimoni Ratu

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Sergio Santillan W 12 Marcos Obregon
Simon Ramoni KO 5 Khulile Makeba
Mercito Gesta W 10 Alex Guevarra
Francisco Arce D 10 Alejandro Moreno
Diosdado Gabi Tech. Win 4 Jose Tirado
Evert Briceno KO 9 Jose Luis Graterol

FLYWEIGHTS

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam Tech. Win
Daisuke Naito
(Retains WBC Title)
Lorenzo Parra W 12 Takefumi Sakata
(Retains WBA Title)
Jorge Arce KO 2 Hussein Hussein
Alberto Rosas W 12 Valerio Sanchez
Raul Medina W 12 Carlos Ponce
Masaharu Naganawa W 10 Atsushi Kato
Victor Burgos W 10
Javier Maravilla Murillo
Kaichon Sor Vorapin KO 5 Ricardo Albia
Fahpetchnoi Sor Chitpattana KO 3
Richard Garcia

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Daniel Reyes KO 6 Valentin Leon
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin KO 1 Dicky Timor
Edgar Gabihan W 10 Jun Talape
Larry Mede W 10 Alfred Nagal
Ryan Bito W 10 Jerry Duaso
Javier Tello KO 2 Elvis Romero

STRAWWEIGHTS

Yutaka Niida Tech. Win 10 Eriberto Gejon
(Retains WBA Title)
Benjie Sorolla W 12
Saengpetch Sor Sakulphan
Jun Arlos KO 7 Jae Won Kim

BOXING EQUIPMENT
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PRESENTS

The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

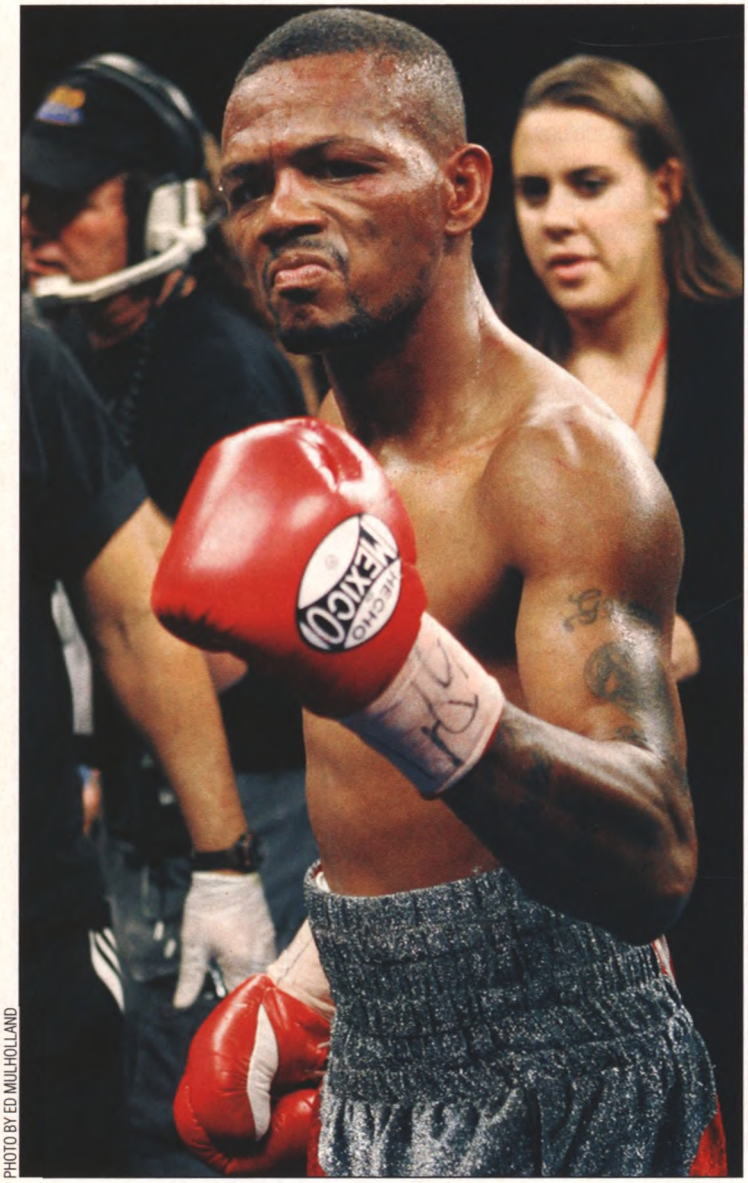

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Either Robbie Peden's a lot better than we gave him credit for, or 130 pounds wasn't really Nate Campbell's best weight. Given the way Peden got completely dominated by Marco Antonio Barrera in his most recent fight, we'll go with Option B.

Fighting as a lightweight against Almazbek "Kid Diamond" Raiymkulov in October, Campbell looked like a new man, and scored probably the best win of his career—at a time when many had written him off as a gatekeeper on his last legs. Raiymkulov was undefeated and rated as the number-seven lightweight contender in THE RING's rankings, and was listed as a minus-450 favorite to dispose of Campbell. Considering Campbell had lost his previous fight (a 10-round split decision to decent Francisco Lorenzo) and been stopped twice by Peden before that, those odds seemed quite reasonable. If anything, maybe they were being a little bit generous to "The Galaxxy Warrior."

But Campbell showed a bounce in his step that he hadn't had in a while, as he outfought the methodical Raiymkulov at every turn. He put Kid Diamond on the floor three times, and even with a huge lead entering the last round, he refused to grow complacent, and instead finished the show with a knockout.

Campbell is an outrageous personality and a fun fighter who we all hoped would turn into a star. For a little while there, that was looking like a pipe dream. But if he keeps fighting like he did against Raiymkulov, it might not be.

• • • •

Nate Campbell

RINGSIDE REPORTS

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Toney punishes Guinn on the inside

James Toney W 12 Dominick Guinn

Reno, Nevada: At 5'9", 235 pounds, the perception is that there's a lot of James Toney to hit. But after 12 rounds of making the 6'3" Guinn connect with nothing but air, Toney proved that perception is not always reality. Toney, Grand Rapids, Michigan, had his way with Guinn, 221, Hot Springs, Arkansas, on the inside and the outside and notched a one-sided unanimous decision in front of 3,089 fans at the Reno Events Center.

Judges Keith MacDonald (USA), Dalby Shirley (USA), and Paul Smith (USA) had Toney, who was defending a minor belt, winning by scores of 117-111, 119-109, and 119-109, respectively. THE RING also scored it 119-109 for the former middleweight, super middleweight, and cruiserweight titlist, whose victory over WBA heavyweight beltholder John Ruiz in April was declared a no-contest after Toney tested positive for steroids.

Guinn, 25-3-1 (18), backed Toney into the ropes early and initiated an inside fight that ultimately led to his own demise, as the crafty 76-fight veteran successfully dipped, dodged, and countered with every shot in his vast repertoire. Although Guinn, who earned $150,000, occasionally tried to use his height and reach advantages from the outside, the 37-year-old Toney still managed to outbox and outslug his 30-year-old opponent.

Toney's left hooks to the body reportedly damaged Guinn's ribs in the sixth round, and "The Southern Disaster" also claimed he was the victim of a thumb to the eye in the seventh that troubled him throughout the remainder of the fight.

"Lights Out" was equally adept on the attack in the eighth round, ripping Guinn's flanks with both hands before coming up the middle with right uppercuts. Toney had fun in the 10th, landing at will with rights to the head, lefts to the body, and jabs up and down, while Guinn could never connect solidly.

Toney also had the support of the crowd, which chanted his name throughout the fight and was ecstatic about his energy after earlier enduring a horrific showing by Chris Byrd and DaVarryl Williamson.

"I love people. I'm the people's champion," Toney proclaimed. "I make fights exciting. I'm like Archie Moore. I'm like Jersey Joe Walcott and Rocky Marciano. I'm old school. I want tough fights all the time. I don't bypass nobody."

Although he expressed a wish to meet world heavyweight champion Vitali Klitschko, Toney said Byrd might be next—if the price is right.

"It would have to be [an] 80-20 [split]. Look how he stunk out the place," Toney, 69-4-2 (43) with 1 no-contest, said. "His fight was terrible. Horrendous. That's embarrassing for him to call himself heavyweight champion of the world."

Freddie Roach, Toney's trainer, said Toney, who took home $307,500, also fought with a bruised right hand and didn't spar the last two weeks of training camp.

Perception may not always be reality, but it appears that a healthy James Toney could cause nightmares for any heavyweight out there.

The referee was Jay Nady (USA).

Television: Showtime

Promoters: Goossen-Tutor Promotions, Gary Shaw Productions, and Don King Productions

(10-1-05)

Mike Houser

Chris Byrd W 12 DaVarryl Williamson

Reno, Nevada: On July 4, 1910, "The Biggest Little City" hosted the historic heavyweight championship bout between Jack

PHOTO BY JUSTINE BYRNE

Byrd tags Williamson with a southpaw jab during boring bout

Johnson and Jim Jeffries. On May 20, 1985, it saw Larry Holmes successfully defend his world heavyweight title for the 20th time, against Carl Williams.

But on October 1, 2005, a different kind of history was made when 3,089 fans at the Reno Events Center were treated to perhaps the most boring heavyweight title fight ever when Byrd notched an abysmally unimpressive 12-round unanimous decision over challenger and good friend Williamson.

Rather than notable exchanges between the two safety-first boxers, the match was highlighted by the cheers referee Vic Drakulich (USA) received when he warned the pair to start fighting in the second round and the beginning of the sixth. The restless crowd began booing noisily at the end of the first frame and relented only to cheer the ring card girls.

Even with chants of "Fight! Fight! Fight!" accompanying the sound of stamping feet, the 35-year-old Byrd, 213, Flint, Michigan, and the 37-year-old Williamson, 225, Washington, D.C., were seemingly content to toss fly-swatting jabs at each other's gloves with neither fighter taking risks even once during the seemingly endless affair, which prompted Nevada State Athletic Commission executive director Marc Ratner to consider holding their purses (he ultimately didn't). Judges Glenn Trowbridge (USA), Pat Russell (USA), and Doug Tucker (USA) saw it 115-113, 116-112, and 116-112, respectively, with Tucker commenting after the fight that he had to award rounds to the fighter "who landed one or two slaps more." THE RING agreed, tallying a 116-114 score in Byrd's favor.

The bout was roughly even through eight rounds, with Williamson, now 22-4 (18), managing to land a long left jab while Byrd was ineffectively aggressive, cautiously moving forward without letting his hands go. Making his fourth defense of the IBF strap he won in December 2002 against Evander Holyfield, Byrd, 39-2-1 (20), waited until the final 10 seconds of the rounds before landing light combinations to Williamson's body and head.

Byrd, who picked up a generous $425,000 for his less than stellar performance, appeared to do the better work in the ninth, 10th, and 11th rounds, but Williamson (who pocketed $75,075) outworked his defensive-minded opponent in the final canto.

Asked if he was satisfied with his performance, Byrd shrugged.

"That I went 12 rounds, yes. That I was fighting after 11 months off, no," he said. "I'm not a slugger, but I had to bring the fight. I had to outslick him before I got in. DaVarryl's a strong fighter. I wasn't going to get caught coming in and be stupid."

Byrd also had some strong words for his promoter, Don King.

"King never showed up. He doesn't care. All my distractions over the last 11 months are all on him. Why didn't he let me fight? I don't care to be with him any longer. I complained, and now he's punishing me."

Television: Showtime

Promoters: Goossen-Tutor Promotions, Gary Shaw Productions, and Don King Productions

(10-1-05)

Mike Houser

Shane Mosley W 10 Jose Luis Cruz

Las Vegas, Nevada: Mosley was once known as, pound-for-pound, the best fighter in the world, but those days seemed quite a long way off when Mosley took on undefeated Cruz at the MGM Grand Garden Arena on the undercard of Marco Antonio Barrera-Robbie Peden. Mosley won on points, but the fight featured very little action and Sugar Shane didn't show much in the way of the skills that once made him great. Still, a win is a win, and winning was the top priority for a fighter who had been victorious just twice in his previous seven fights and hadn't been on a multi-fight winning streak in four years.

The hand speed advantage of Mosley, 148, Pomona, California, became clear in the first round, as Cruz, 148, Mazatlan, Mexico, marched forward, looking for the big upset knockout. Mosley moved around the ring using his superior footwork and his left jab to keep Cruz from landing the big shot.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mosley digs a right to Cruz' belly en route to unanimous decision

Former lightweight, welterweight, and junior middleweight titleholder Mosley, 34, now back at welter (or at least within a pound of it), was boxing impressively enough in the first half of the 10-rounder, even if the action was forgettable. Cruz, 28, landed some solid rights to Mosley's chin, but in the fifth, Mosley landed cleaner rights to Cruz' head.

In the second half of the bout, Cruz came on, Mosley slowed down, and the scorecards became closer. In the eighth, Mosley landed a triple left hook to Cruz' chin that momentarily stunned him. Cruz, whose left eye was swelling, fought back and continued trying to work Mosley's body with lefts and rights to the ribs. In the last round, Cruz came alive and landed a good left hook on Mosley's chin. Cruz, 32-1-2 (27), finished stronger than Mosley, but suffered his first loss as Mosley was awarded the unanimous decision. Duane Ford (USA) scored it 98-92, Chuck Giampa (USA) saw it 96-94, and C.J. Ross (USA) had it 97-93 (the same as THE RING). The referee was Robert Byrd (USA).

"I knew he was a tough customer, and when you have a person in front of you who has a lot of power, he can catch you with something and do some damage," said Mosley, 41-4 (35) with 1 no-contest. "I could've been more explosive. He was a little bit stronger than expected." Mosley said he wanted to fight all the best fighters out there—welterweight champ Zab Judah, Floyd Mayweather, Fernando Vargas, and Antonio Margarito.

Television: HBO PPV
Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions
(9-17-05)
Wayne McCullough

Jesus Chavez KO 11 Leavander Johnson

Las Vegas, Nevada: When a fighter is making his first defense of a major title, there's an unwritten rule that he's allowed to take on a relatively easy opponent. IBF lightweight titleholder Johnson did not choose to go that route, and the fact that it cost him his title seemed quite irrelevant in the tragic aftermath of his defense against former 130-pound beltholder Chavez on the Barrera-Peden undercard at the MGM Grand Garden Arena. Johnson lost by TKO in the 11th round, and at that point, his real fight was just beginning.

Johnson collapsed in his dressing room and was rushed to UMC Hospital. Dr. Tony Alamo of the Nevada State Athletic Commission told the gathered press, "Johnson suffered a subdural hematoma. Paramedics and doctors were on hand at his collapse. At the hospital, he underwent emergency surgery to relieve pressure on the brain." While his condition was initially described as "grim" and "critical," everyone held out hope and prayed for good news. The doctors at UMC placed Johnson in a medically induced coma, and reports in the first 24 hours were positive, but on the Thursday following the bout, Johnson lost his fight for life.

In retrospect, it shouldn't have been surprising that this was a dangerous style matchup, as Chavez is a busy puncher who tends to dish out slow beatings rather than one-punch knockouts, and Johnson was an aging fighter with a willingness to take shots to land shots. Johnson, 135, Atlantic City, New Jersey, was the bigger fighter at 5'9", compared to Chavez, 135, Austin, Texas, who is only 5'5", but from almost the outset, it was apparent that Chavez was the better fighter.

Chavez, 32, dominated most of the fight with his relentless, come-forward fighting, throwing lots of punches. Johnson, 35, tried from the opening bell to use his long left jab to keep his shorter opponent at bay, and it worked a little in the first round. But Chavez was fighting smart, trying to land right hands over Johnson's low left. An accidental headbutt in the second round opened a cut over Johnson's right eye. Chavez landed a clean left hook on Johnson's chin that rocked him slightly, but the titleholder fought back.

By the fifth, Johnson was having less success trying to keep his distance by using his jab, and Chavez proved to be the stronger fighter and took over in the second half of the fight. Two right hands to Johnson's chin in the seventh round shook him again, but he continued to fight back. Johnson was finding the pace that Chavez had set too much to handle. In the eighth and ninth, Chavez was landing clean punches at will to Johnson's head and body.

Johnson's hands were low for most of the fight and his punching power seemed to have no effect on the determined Chavez. The 10th was all Chavez, as he started loading up with single power-shots that hit Johnson clean nearly every time. It looked as if the fight might be drawing to a close at this point, but Johnson showed guts and stayed in there. The ringside physician had a look at him between rounds 10 and 11 and allowed him to continue.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Chavez jams a left into Johnson's face in fatal fight

Chavez, 42-3 (29), jumped on Johnson, 34-5-2 (26) with 1 no-contest, in the 11th and landed punch after punch to Johnson's head. After at least 20 punches landed, referee Tony Weeks (USA) jumped in to halt the bout, and Chavez picked up another major title with a TKO win at 0:38 of round 11. Hopefully, he'll be able to cope with the guilt that often plagues survivors of fatal bouts and will proceed on as one of the better 130- to 135-pound boxers in the world.

Television: HBO PPV

Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions

(9-17-05)

Wayne McCullough

PHOTO BY ROLAND MAGUNIA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Brewster twists Krasniqi's head and distorts his face en route to ninth round TKO victory

Lamon Brewster KO 9 Luan Krasniqi

Hamburg, Germany: The hopes and dreams of a nation were sustained for eight rounds before, like their gallant challenger, they fell crashing to the floor. A century to the day since the birth of Max Schmeling, Germany's only world heavyweight champion, Krasniqi, 224¾, Rottweil, Germany, seemed poised to seize the WBO heavyweight title from Brewster, 228¼, Los Angeles, California. He led comfortably on the judges' scorecards. But a powerful left hook in the eighth round changed the course of the fight, and Brewster finished the job, devastatingly, in the ninth. More than 10,000 fans had come to the Color Line Arena to see Brewster's third title defense.

Schmeling's passing last February invested the occasion with particular poignancy. It was 75 years before that the fighter who will forever be linked with Joe Louis won the world heavyweight title after being fouled by Jack Sharkey. Krasniqi, who won a bronze medal in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, earned this shot by knocking out Lance Whitaker in six rounds in May. But the weight of history proved overwhelming.

"I really wanted to do it," he said, referring to his quest to follow in Schmeling's footsteps. "I'm very, very sorry. I was so close. But I felt too certain in the fight. That's heavyweight boxing. You're on top, then one blow and you're down. I learned a hard lesson tonight."

In the early going, the German was handing out the lesson. Brewster, 33-2 (29), who won the belt with a knockout of Wladimir Klitschko and had defended it most recently with an even more devastating denouement of Andrew Golota, came out of his corner throwing hard punches, but by the end of the opening round he had been warned by Puerto Rican referee Jose Rivera for punching low. Krasniqi took control of the fight with his jab, firing combinations off the jab and frustrating Brewster, who had obviously hoped to end the fight in a hurry. In round three, the American wore a cut near his left eyebrow and a worried expression. This was not the fight he had anticipated.

Krasniqi believed he had been hit low again in the fourth and turned his back on his foe. But referee Rivera took no action and Brewster pounced, landing a left hook, but doing no more damage. In the fifth, Brewster absorbed another steady stream of blows that, while not devastating, were achieving the effect of slowing him down and increasing Krasniqi's lead on points. With the crowd chanting his name, Krasniqi went toe-to-toe with Brewster in the sixth before Brewster nailed him with a solid left hook in the corner. The German escaped and then delivered a damaging left hook of his own, perhaps his best punch of the fight. For Brewster to prevail, he was going to have to dig deep.

This he did in round eight. Not content to just outbox Brewster, Krasniqi, 28-2-1 (14), decided to try to outpunch him, too, and it proved his undoing. A tremendous left hook by the American landed on the German's chin and down he went. Rivera gave him the benefit of a long count, but not even that, nor the intervention of the bell, could save him. Krasniqi was badly shaken. Brewster, 32, charged out to finish it in the ninth, but the 34-year-old Krasniqi survived his initial assault, and it seemed that Brewster might have tired. But he regrouped and managed to put together another pulverizing attack, culminating in a right hand that persuaded the referee to step in at 2:48.

"Luan is a good fighter who landed many good shots against me," said Brewster. "I want to be the world champion, not just a United States champion, and I proved it tonight by coming to Germany and defeating a game challenger."

Promoters: Universum-Box, Don King Productions

(9-28-05)

Brian Doogan

Hozumi Hasegawa KO 7 Gerardo Martinez

Yokohama, Japan: WBC bantam titlist Hasegawa, 117¼, was impressive in his first defense as he overwhelmed Mexican Martinez, 117½, flooring him four times, and finally stopping him at 2:18 of the seventh round at Yokohama Arena. The 30-year-old

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Hasegawa stops late substitute Martinez in the seventh round

Martinez was a late replacement for Diego Morales (the brother of Erik Morales), who pulled out just days before the fight with a training injury.

The 24-year-old southpaw titleholder, who upset and dethroned long-reigning Thailander Veeraphol Sahaprom in April, proved faster and fresher than Martinez, 27-6-2 (20), from the outset, scoring with sharp right-left combinations. In the third round, Hasegawa, 19-2 (6), exploded a southpaw right hook to the face of the challenger, putting him on the canvas. Having swept every round thanks to his superior speed, the Japanese lefty turned loose in the seventh and floored the game Mexican three more times, at which point referee Laurence Cole (USA) declared a well-received halt. Before the stoppage, Duane Ford (USA) and Bruce McTavish (Philippines) tallied 60-53, while Hubert Minn (USA) had it 60-52, all in favor of Hasegawa.

Promoter: Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions

(9-25-05)

Joe Koizumi

Yutaka Niida Tech. Win 10 Eriberto Gejon

Yokohama, Japan: Niida, 104½, Japan, barely held on to the WBA 105-pound belt when he was awarded a split technical decision over previously unbeaten Filipino Gejon, 104¾, at 2:01 of the 10th round at Yokohama Arena. The challenger was declared by referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) to be unfit to go on because of a very deep gash over the right eyebrow caused by an accidental headbutt. The scorecards through 10 were as follows: Pinit Prayadsab (Thailand) and Wansoo Yuh (Korea) both had it 96-95 for the more aggressive Niida, while Medardo Villalobos (Panama) scored it 97-93 for the Filipino jabber.

Gejon, 26, got off to a good start by throwing a steady stream of jabs at the much shorter beltholder. But in the fourth, the 26-year-old Niida, 19-1-3 (8), found his range and started delivering fireworks, freely swinging with left and right hooks to the face and belly. Gejon, 21-1-1 (13), failed to present much pressure in return, and Niida, making the third defense of his second WBA title reign, kept landing strong shots against the cautious challenger in the seventh and eighth. It was such a close bout that either man could have been ahead at the time of the stoppage, but Gejon apparently lacked the necessary aggressiveness as the challenger to wrest the belt on the titlist's home turf.

Promoter: Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions

(9-25-05)

Joe Koizumi

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Niida aims a left at Filipino challenger Gejon

Glen Johnson KO 10 George Jones

Brooks, California: With his explosive 10th-round TKO of "Khalid" Jones on Fox Sports Net's *Best Damn Sports Show, Period*, former world 175-pound champion and THE RING's 2004 Fighter of the Year Johnson made a case that he might still be the world's best damn light heavyweight, period.

After knocking Roy Jones cold in nine rounds last September and following the upset with a split decision over Antonio Tarver three

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Johnson plows a flush right into Jones' face

months later, "The Road Warrior" dropped a close but unanimous decision to Tarver in June and was looking to rebound against George Jones in a so-called IBF title eliminator. He did it in impressive fashion, especially in comparison to Tarver's underwhelming win over Roy Jones the next night.

The aggressive, ever-pressing Johnson, 173, Miami, Florida, via Jamaica, took advantage early of a ring that measured 16' x 16' on the inside and landed a clean right hand bomb that dropped Jones, 172, Paterson, New Jersey, in the opening moments of the first round. But Jones rose quickly, brushed himself off, and began to make a fight of it. Behind a high peek-a-boo guard, southpaw Jones survived a Johnson right to the head and four left hooks to the body along the ropes in the third and began moving side-to-side and boxing.

Johnson appeared to take a breather in the fifth as Jones, 23-3-1 (13), won a couple of the middle rounds with his busier albeit feather-fisted attack. But Johnson, whose left hooks started swelling Jones' right eye in the sixth, staggered him with a big right in the eighth and punished him with an eight-punch combo in the ninth.

After landing two left hooks to the body in the 10th, Johnson hurt Jones, who earned $30,000, with a right hand and left uppercut to the head, setting up two more giant right hands and prompting referee Marcos Rosales (USA) to intervene at the 2:30 mark. At the time of the stoppage, Johnson was up 87-83, 87-83, and 89-81 on the scorecards of Marshall Walker (USA), Steve English (USA), and Marty Sammon (USA), respectively.

"The first thing I noticed was the small ring," said Johnson, who pocketed $50,000 for the win. "It didn't leave him a lot of room to move. I was surprised he went down in the first round, but I set up a good right hand and knew I landed a good one."

Johnson, 43-10-2 (29), said there was a reason he slowed down beginning in the fifth.

"My plan was to end it within four rounds," he said. "He didn't engage me how I wanted him to and he started running. I backed off my power to bait him in and set up combinations. Nothing he threw had any effect."

In spite of his number-one ranking in the IBF, Johnson said he wasn't interested in facing current strapholder Clinton Woods for the third time. (Johnson won the second meeting, and seemed to get the better of their first bout as well, despite settling for a draw.)

"I want to fight the best fighter—Tarver," Johnson said. "I want the big-money fights at this stage of my life. I want money to secure my future. I want to fight for the people."

Promoter: Goossen-Tutor Promotions

(9-30-05)

Mike Houser

Nate Campbell KO 10 Almazbek Raiymkulov

Tampa, Florida: The main supporting bout underneath Antonio Tarver-Roy Jones III presented boxing at its most unpredictable, as Campbell, a hand-picked, naturally smaller opponent with three losses in the last 19 months, derailed undefeated "Kid Diamond" Raiymkulov's express train to the top. Most viewed this pairing as a complete mismatch, and that's essentially what it turned out to be, but not in favor of the prefight favorite. Campbell dominated with his superior speed and work rate, scoring three knockdowns en route to stopping Kid Diamond with 34 seconds remaining in the contest.

Over the first three rounds at the St. Pete Times Forum, Campbell, 135, Jacksonville, Florida, took advantage of his opponent's tendency to start slow, jabbing well and blasting the predictable Raiymkulov, 135, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Kyrgyzstan, repeatedly with clean right hands. Kid Diamond, coming off a relatively impressive draw against the highly regarded Joel Casamayor, was having trouble solving the herky-jerky style of "The Galaxxy Warrior," and simply wasn't letting his hands go enough. Campbell, 33, turned the intensity up a notch in the fourth, and scored right out of the gate with two wide lefts and a straight right. Raiymkulov, 28, finally broke through with a right uppercut later in the round, but it wasn't long before Campbell was effectively smothering the supposedly stronger man along on the ropes, forcing Raiymkulov into a sloppy, somewhat desperate aggressiveness by round's end.

Raiymkulov's hopes for a comeback were all but squashed in the fifth, when he was hurt badly by a left-right to the body, then dropped along the ropes by a right-left combination to the head. Kid Diamond got up as referee Brian Garry (USA) reached the count of eight and trudged forward with 35 seconds remaining in the round. But another right hand soon dropped the former Olympian again, and he headed back to his corner frustrated, hurt, and on the wrong end of a 10-7 round.

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SAMPLE

PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

Campbell drills Raiymkulov with a right during upset victory

Campbell, 27-4-1 (23), didn't let up in the sixth, bloodying Raiymkulov's lip, hurting him again to the body, and prompting Garry to step in a couple of times to tell Kid Diamond that he needed to fight back or the bout would be stopped. According to CompuBox, Campbell outlanded Raiymkulov 35-7 in the round. The seventh brought a one-two that sent Raiymkulov reeling back into a corner, and a stoppage seemed a viable option by round's end, but in the eighth and ninth, Kid Diamond actually mounted a mini-comeback against his tiring adversary.

He still clearly needed a knockout heading into the final round, however, and instead he absorbed a succession of right hands. Late in the round, a bodyshot dropped Kid Diamond along the ropes, and though Raiymkulov, 20-1-1 (12), beat the count, he indicated to ref Garry that he'd had enough, and the bout was called off at the 2:26 mark. All told, the CompuBox stats had Campbell outlanding Raiymkulov by a 252-83 margin, and he scored with 43 percent of his punches, compared to only 15 percent for Raiymkulov.

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View

Promoters: Star Boxing, Top Rank

(10-1-05)

Lorenzo Parra W 12 Takefumi Sakata

Tokyo, Japan: WBA flyweight king Parra, 112, Venezuela, just barely kept his belt in his fourth defense as he had a tough time coping with the constantly aggressive Sakata, 112, Japan, but managed to earn a majority decision over 12 heats at the Korakuen Hall—just as he had against Sakata 15 months earlier in his first title defense. Judge Guy Jutras (Canada) scored it 115-113 for Parra, Medardo Villalobos (Panama) had the Venezuelan up 114-113, and Silvestre Abainza (Philippines) saw it even at 114-114. The referee was Raul Caiz Sr. (USA).

The rematch followed a pattern similar to their first encounter. The titleholder made a good start by making prominent use of his sharp jabs. Sakata, 25, took the fight to Parra starting in the third, while Parra, two years his senior at 27, did a fair job of countering the willing mixer. Sakata kept stalking the retreating beltholder, who occasionally caught him with more accurate combinations. The Venezuelan, who is best known for dethroning Eric Morel in 2003, couldn't display his best form, but he at least managed to make Sakata miss with most of his busy combinations.

The 11th saw referee Caiz take a point from Parra for hitting below the belt, which made the tallies closer, but still was not enough for Sakata, 24-3-1 (10), to seize a victory. Parra, 26-0 (17), is now slated to risk his 112-pound title against top contender and 2000 Olympic gold medalist Brahim Asloum, who was in attendance at this fight. That tough defense was scheduled as of press time for December 5 in Paris.

Promoter: Kyoei Promotions, in association with Teiken Promotions

(9-19-05)

Joe Koizumi ■

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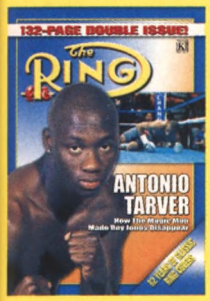

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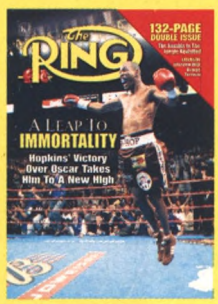

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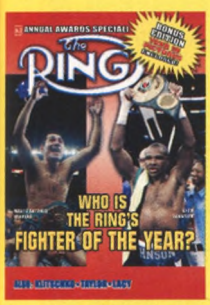

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CLASSIC

From The Ring, March 1987

WELCOME TO THE TYSON ERA

WBA Crown Next For Tyson Following Annihilation Of Berbick

By Nigel Collins

One came away from Mike Tyson's second-round annihilation of Trevor Berbick feeling he'd seen a pivotal episode in boxing history, a match to be remembered, not for the fight itself, for there was none, but for the historic significance of the moment. Like Dempsey's cruel demolition of Willard, Louis' battering of Braddock, and Marciano's come-from-behind kayo over Walcott, Tyson's second-round knockout of Berbick ushered in a new boxing era—the Tyson Era.

One also came away from the Las Vegas Hilton Center feeling he'd witnessed an execution. Tyson disposed of Berbick with all the subtlety of a slaughterhouse worker wielding a maul. So precise was his violent dismissal of the WBC champion, the question on everyone's lips was, "Can anybody beat him?"

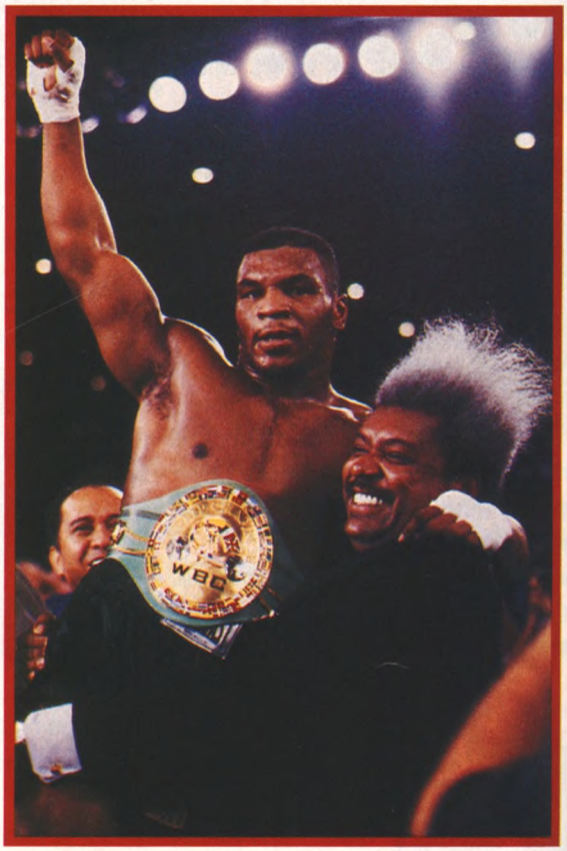
It is a question that could keep arenas full and television ratings soaring for a long time to come. For Tyson not only wins, he does so in a manner that stirs instincts long dominant in man's soul. Call it blood lust if you will, but anyway you say it, it spells box office bonanza.

Though few were foolhardy enough to pick Berbick to win, most learned observers agreed Trevor would give the 20-year-old dreadnaught a decent workout, administering a bruising welcome to the championship ranks before succumbing to the drive and enthusiasm of youth. But the "Fighting Preacher" never had a prayer. Tyson reduced his participation to a cameo role, a mere prop in the drama that saw Mike become the youngest fighter in boxing history to win even partial recognition as the world heavyweight champion.

If there are still some who doubt Tyson's authenticity, they belong among those who believe the world is flat and the moon made of green cheese. The vast majority are either long faithful or newly converted to Tyson's camp.

With the first step easily accomplished, Tyson is well on his way to the undisputed heavyweight title. By the time you read this, Tyson will be back in Las Vegas prepping for the next step in his quest—against the WBA champion in early March. The fight will once again be hosted by the Las Vegas Hilton, but in a specially constructed outdoor stadium large enough (15,000 seats) to accommodate Tyson's growing legion of fans.

Who will be looking at him from the opposite



Tyson was on his way to becoming king of the boxing world after trouncing Trevor Berbick. In doing so, "Iron Mike" became the youngest fighter in boxing history to win a portion of the world heavyweight title.

Tyson went after the titleholder immediately after the opening bell, throwing huge rights and backing "The Fighting Preacher" up against the ropes. It appeared as if Berbick would weather the Tyson storm, until Tyson connected with a short left hook that sent Berbick reeling at the end of the round.

comer is still undecided as we go to press. Tim Witherspoon and Tony Tubbs are scheduled to meet again in Madison Square Garden on December 12 in a rematch that became a necessity when Witherspoon's urine came up dirty following his 15-round decision over Tubbs last January in Atlanta. Since then, Witherspoon has boosted his stock by stopping Frank Bruno in London, while Tubbs padded his bank account, if not his record, by accepting step-aside money.

Witherspoon just might have the best chance of stalling Tyson's march to the Hall of Fame. Owner of probably the best chin in the division, "Terrible Tim" has mixed with the best of company. His 1983 loss to Larry Holmes was razor close, and his wins over Greg Page (W 12), Bonecrusher Smith (W 12), Quick Tillis (KO 1), Renaldo Snipes (W 10), James Broad (K0 2), and Bruno (KO 1) give him perhaps the best resume among the current crop of big boys.

Whether it's smoking pot or gorging himself at the dinner table, the Philadelphian's biggest problem has always been a lack of discipline outside the ring. If he beats Tubbs impressively in their rematch and whips himself into top shape for Tyson, "Iron Mike" just might have a fight on his hands. Otherwise, Witherspoon will seem little more than a Berbick clone.

Tubbs, should he prevail the second time around against Witherspoon, is another fighter who constantly threatens to eat himself out of a career. A gifted boxer with surprising speed for a large man, a finely conditioned Tubbs should provide Tyson with a much more evasive target than any of his previous opponents. But Tubbs is a pitty-pat puncher without the power to hold Mike at bay. If Tony is the WBA champion come March, another Tyson victory is practically assured.

Assuming Tyson is victorious against the WBA champ, only Michael Spinks, the undefeated IBF titleholder, stands in his way of becoming the youngest heavyweight champion of all-time. Of course, Spinks may decide to duck the issue by ducking Tyson. In that event, who's left, besides Spinks, capable of giving Tyson a tussle?

The most obvious choice is 1984 Olympic super heavyweight champion Tyrell Biggs. But even Biggs' co-manager, Shelly Finkel, has his doubts.

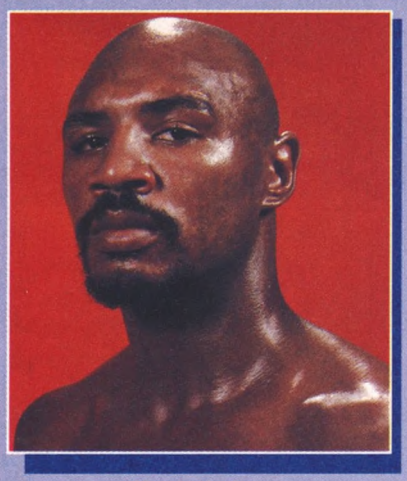
"Maybe in a year or so," said Finkel only minutes after Tyson sent Berbick reeling into obscurity. "Even then he would have to stick and move, try to outbox him. Nobody is going to be able to punch with Tyson."

The jury is still out on the undefeated Biggs. He was progressing well after kicking his cocaine habit until he suffered a broken collarbone during his winning effort against Jeff Sims. Although Tyrell has recovered from the injury and scored several more wins, he has yet to regain the form he showed prior to the accident. He could still develop into the challenger of the future, but at this time there are too many unanswered questions to consider him a serious threat to Tyson's dominance.

So, who's left?

Well, there's former WBC boss Pinklon Thomas, currently on the comeback trail. But nobody who saw his listless win over' William Hosea (a one-round Tyson victim) on the Tyson-Berbick undercard would pay to see the match. Pinklon has a pretty left jab, but it is highly unlikely it would be enough to bother the rampaging Tyson.

THE RING RATINGS, March 1987



Marvin Hagler

HEAVYWEIGHT
World Champ: Michael Spinks, St. Louis, MO
1. **Mike Tyson**, Catskill, NY
2. **Tim Witherspoon**, Philadelphia, PA
3. **Pinklon Thomas**, Wyandotte, MI
4. **Tony Tubbs**, Cincinnati, OH
5. **Trevor Berbick**, Canada
6. **James Smith**, Magnolia, NC
7. **James "Buster" Douglas**, Columbus, OH
8. **Tony Tucker**, Grand Rapids, MI
9. **Frank Bruno**, England
10. **Tyrell Biggs**, Philadelphia, PA

CRUISERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Carlos "Sugar" DeLeon, Puerto Rico
1. **Evander Holyfield,** Atlanta, GA
2. **Ricky Parkey,** Morristown, TN
3. **Dwight Muhammad Qawi,** Camden, NJ
4. **Lee Roy Murphy,** Chicago, IL
5. **Bert Cooper,** Philadelphia, PA
6. **Henry Tillman,** Los Angeles, CA
7. **John Odhiambo,** Uganda
8. **Bernard Benton,** Detroit, MI
9. **Alonzo Ratliff,** Chicago, IL
10. **Eddie Mustafa Muhammad,** Brooklyn, NY

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Marvin Johnson,** Indianapolis, IN
2. **Bobby Czyz,** Wanaque, NJ
3. **Dennis Andries,** England
4. **Slobodan Kacar,** Yugoslavia
5. **Eddie Davis,** Freeport, NY
6. **Juan D. Roldan**, Argentina
7. **Willie Edwards,** Detroit, MI
8. **Leslie Stewart,** Trinidad
9. **Jesse Shelby,** Ft. Worth, TX
10. **Prince Mamah Mohammed,** Ghana

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Marvin Hagler, Brockton, MA
1. **Thomas Hearns,** Detroit, MI
2. **John Mugabi,** Uganda
3. **Robbie Sims,** Brockton, MA
4. **Herol Graham,** England
5. **Iran Barkley,** Bronx, NY
6. **James Kinchen,** San Diego, CA
7. **Milton McCrory,** Detroit, MI
8. **Michael Nunn,** Sherman Oaks, CA
9. **Lindell Holmes,** Detroit, MI
10. **Michael Olajide,** Canada

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **John Mugabi,** Uganda
2. **Mike McCallum,** New York, NY
3. **Buster Drayton,** Philadelphia, PA
4. **Duane Thomas,** Detroit, MI
5. **Matthew Hilton,** Canada
6. **Donald Curry,** Ft. Worth, TX
7. **Carlos Santos,** Puerto Rico
8. **Davey Moore,** Bronx, NY
9. **Julian Jackson,** Virgin Islands
10. **Mark Medal,** Jersey City, NJ

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Lloyd Honeyghan, England
1. **Mark Breland,** New York, NY
2. **Maurice Blocker,** Washington, D.C.
3. **Johnny Bumphus,** Clementon, NJ
4. **Marlon Starling,** Hartford, CT
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9. **Gene Hatcher,** Ft. Worth, TX
10. **Colin Jones,** Wales

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Patrizio Oliva,** Italy
2. **Tsuyoshi Hamada,** Japan
3. **Frankie Warren,** Corpus Christi, T
4. **Rene Arredondo,** Mexico
5. **Joe Louis Manley,** Atlantic City, N
6. **Lonnie Smith,** Denver, CO
7. **Terry Marsh,** England
8. **Ronnie Shields,** Port Arthur, TX
9. **Gary Hinton,** Philadelphia, PA
10. **Rodolfo "Gato" Gonzalez,** Mexi

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Edwin Rosario,** Puerto Rico
2. **Hector Camacho,** New York, NY
3. **Jimmy Paul,** Detroit, MI
4. **Livingstone Bramble,** Passaic, NJ
5. **Darryl Tyson,** Washington, D.C.
6. **Jose Luis Ramirez,** Mexico
7. **Terrence Alli,** New York, NY
8. **Meldrick Taylor,** Philadelphia, PA
9. **Pernell Whitaker,** Norfolk, VA
10. **Cornelius Boza-Edwards,** Ugand

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Brian Mitchell, South Africa
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez,** Mexico
2. **Barry Michael,** Australia
3. **Juan LaPorte,** Puerto Rico
4. **Rocky Lockridge,** Maple Shade, N
5. **Alfredo Layne,** Panama
6. **Mario Martinez,** Mexico
7. **Johnny De La Rosa,** Detroit, MI
8. **Dwight Pratchett,** Gary, IN
9. **Edgar Castro,** Venezuela
10. **Francisco Tomas Cruz,** Brazil

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Steve Cruz, Ft. Worth, Texas
1. **Azumah Nelson,** Ghana
2. **Barry McGuigan,** Ireland

Of course, any of the above would have been regarded as a serious test for Tyson before the Berbick fight. Surprisingly enough—in light of the eventual outcome—as the countdown to fight time approached, the odds in Tyson's favor narrowed from 5-1 to 3-1. As is often the case, when so-called experts waver (the sportscaster on one local Vegas TV station picked Berbick), "wise guys" hedge their bets. The one person who never had the slightest doubt of the outcome was Tyson. In fact, his "incredible calm" was a "little disquieting" to co-manager Jim Jacobs.

"Mike asked me if I was nervous before the fight," reported Jacobs. "He said not to worry, it's not unusual to be nervous before a world title fight."

The near-capacity crowd of 8,743 at the posh Hilton Center was star-studded with celebrities from all walks of public life. High-priced ticket-holders rubbed elbows with the likes of Kirk Douglas and Mr. T, while those in the bleachers craned their necks to catch a glimpse of fistic nobility ranging from Muhammad Ali to Hector Camacho (the only fighter who drew boos when introduced). Such distractions were essential during the quintessential Don King undercard—a travesty that threatened to set

3. **Antonio Rivera,** Puerto Rico
4. **Marcos Villasana,** Mexico
5. **Calvin Grove**, Pottstown, PA
6. **Bernard Taylor,** Knoxville, TN
7. **Jackie Beard,** Detroit, MI
8. **Jose Marmolejo,** Panama
9. **Ki Yung Chung**, Korea
10. **Antonio Esparragoza**, Venezuela

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Victor Callejas,** Puerto Rico
2. **Samart Payakaroon,** Thailand
3. **Juan "Kid" Meza,** Los Angeles, CA
4. **Loris Stecca,** Italy
5. **Jaime Garza,** Los Angeles, CA
6. **Harold Petty,** Fort Worth, TX
7. **James Pipps,** Vidor, TX
8. **Mike Ayala,** San Antonio, TX
9. **Julian Solis,** Puerto Rico
10. **Ramon Dominguez,** Argentina

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Bernardo Pinango, Venezuela
1. **Miguel Lora,** Colombia
2. **Kaosai Galaxy,** Thailand
3. **Gilberto Roman,** Mexico
4. **Jiro Watanabe,** Japan
5. **Jeff Fenech,** Australia
6. **Gaby Canizales**, Laredo, TX
7. **Greg Richardson,** Youngstown, OH
8. **Albert Davila,** Mexico
9. **Kelvin Seabrooks,** Charlotte, NC
10. **Daniel Zaragoza,** Mexico

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sot Chitalada, Thailand
1. **Jung Koo Chang,** Korea
2. **Hilario Zapata,** Panama
3. **Myung Woo Yuh**, Korea
4. **Paul Gonzales,** Los Angeles, CA
5. **Gabriel Bernal,** Mexico
6. **Hi Sup Shin,** Korea
7. **Joey Olivo**, Los Angeles, CA
8. **Isidro Perez,** Mexico
9. **Benedicto Murillo,** Panama
10. **Alberto Castro,** Colombia

a new standard for diabolical matchmaking.

The challenger made his entrance first, ducking between the ropes as the crowd roared its approval. For the first time in his career, Tyson was not completely bare-chested. He wore a towel over the upper portion of his torso, but remained faithful to his trademark no-socks look. Mike wore black trunks in defiance of the Nevada commission, which upheld the champion's prerogative to pick the color of his trunks. Berbick chose black in an attempt at one-upmanship, but Tyson accepted a $5,000 fine and wore black anyway.

Berbick could not keep Tyson off, as Iron Mike scored the first of his two knockdowns, prompting an eight-count from referee Mills Lane (above). In an attempt to survive, Berbick seemed content on hugging Tyson rather than fighting back (right).

Though Tyson was obviously the fans' favorite, Berbick also had support, and a smattering of yellow and green Jamaican flags could be seen waving bravely throughout the arena as Trevor made his way to the ring. His incongruous, calf-high black socks prompted one wag to note that "between them, there was not a decent pair of hose."

Ring announcer Chuck Hull introduced the combatants, referee Mills Lane gave them their last-minute instructions, and at the sound of the first bell, the fight was on.

As expected, Tyson attacked immediately, throwing himself into the fray with vehemence. It was, however, a more controlled fury than Mike had displayed in the past. He seemed to have achieved a new level of discipline at exactly the moment he needed it most. Gone were the wild swings of earlier bouts, replaced instead by unerringly accurate combinations.

The scheduled 12-rounder was only seconds old when Tyson, 221¼, connected with his first punch. His hand speed was astonishing for a man his size, and he had little trouble beating the taller Berbick to the punch.

"People talk about Mike's punching power," observed Jacobs. "But it's his speed. Nobody ever sees the punch [coming]."

At first, Berbick, a well-conditioned 218½, seemed to absorb Tyson's bombs well. There was even brief cause for hope among his followers when he caught Tyson with a clubbing right to the head. But the rally was short lived. After a quick clinch, Tyson resumed control, scourging Trevor with a vicious assortment of jabs, rights, and left hooks to the head.

As the first round drew to a close, Tyson connected with a short left hook to the head that sent Trevor stumbling backward across the ring in obvious distress. The challenger was still dishing out punishment when the

round-ending bell interrupted his assault.

Berbick wobbled back to his corner with a quizzical look on his face. Never the most mobile of heavyweights, he had opted to slug it out with Tyson, a decision he would later regret.

"I made a silly mistake," confessed Berbick. "I tried to prove my manhood with him in the early rounds."

Unfortunately for Berbick, there were to be no later rounds in which to make amends for his rocky start. Tyson had been training for this fight for most of his life and had vowed to leave the ring either champion or dead.

"I refuse to get hurt. I refuse to get knocked down. I refuse to lose," he declared. "I refuse to leave the ring alive without that belt."

Against such fanatical determination Berbick was practically helpless. In the second, Tyson immediately picked up where he had left off the previous round, hammering the rapidly fading champion with a series of searing rights to the head. As Berbick frantically sought shelter along the ropes, a particularly savage right sent him crashing to the canvas like a man whose legs had been jerked from under him by an invisible rope attached to his ankles.

Showing more valor than common sense, Trevor quickly scrambled to his feet by the count of three. As Lane administered the mandatory eight-count, Berbick stared blankly into the referee's face, the picture of a wounded animal awaiting the hunter's final bullet.

Tyson displayed remarkable control going into the finisher. Instead of struggling for punching room when Berbick wrapped him in a series of bearhugs, Mike patiently waited for the referee to do his job. Then, with his hands free again, he lashed out with deadly concentration, nailing his adversary with the kind of combinations unseen since Joe Louis ruled the heavyweight domain.

"I was throwing, what can you say, hydrogen bombs," said Tyson. "Every punch with murderous intentions."

Then it happened!

Tyson sank a right into Berbick's kidney and followed with an economical left hook that caught Berbick high on the temple, just in back of his ear. There was a split second pause while the shock wave traveled from Trevor's cerebrum to his legs, then, the circuit complete, he toppled over onto his back.

There followed a tragic/comic tableau that bore testimony not only to Tyson's punching power, but also to Berbick's courage. The stricken champion knew he had to try to regain his feet, but his legs simply wouldn't obey the message his brain was sending them. On his first attempt to rise, he flopped over sideways and fell partially through the ropes. He tried again and floundered grotesquely in the opposite direction, finally coming to rest in the arms of Mills Lane, who stopped the fight 2:35 into the second round.

Flush with victory, Tyson was quick to pay tribute to the late Cus D'Amato, who rescued him from reform school and molded him into the kind of fighter capable of winning the heavyweight championship after only a 20-month pro apprenticeship.

"Without Cus, this never could have happened," said Tyson.

When someone wanted to know what D'Amato, who maintained Mike was a future champion from the beginning of their relationship, might have said had he lived to see his prophecy fulfilled, Mike replied: "He'd be downstairs making my breakfast as always, and I'd be afraid to go down, for all

Even though Berbick survived the first round, Tyson was relentless in his onslaught, winging one murderous punch after another (above). Berbick withstood the barrage until a left hook to the head sent him sprawling in the second round (below). The fight was stopped when he was unable to regain his equilibrium.

After the victory, Tyson paid tribute to the late Cus D'Amato, who found Tyson and trained him into becoming a champion. "Without Cus, this never could have happened," Tyson said. "I'm the youngest heavyweight champion and I'm going to be the oldest."

the criticism."

We will never know what faults D'Amato might have found with Tyson's title-winning performance, but Berbick surely wasn't in the mood to find any.

"You saw it. I fought a stupid fight," said Berbick. "He's a very hard, very sharp puncher. I never saw the punch that put me down. I think he has a very good chance to be the undisputed champion."

To his credit, Berbick did not use his legal problems as an excuse. On the Tuesday before the fight, Trevor and his lawyers spent five hours in court seeking to forestall a Nevada judge from attaching $495,000 of his $2.1-million purse. After several days of wrangling, Judge Dell Guy ordered the writ of attachment, but also ordered the plaintiff, promoter Thomas Pendergast of Texas, to put up a bond covering the same amount until another hearing could be held to settle the measure.

Tyson's problem, if indeed it can be construed as a problem at this early stage, is of a different sort. Less than three hours after his triumph over Berbick, fans were lined up 20 deep at the door of Mike's invitation-only victory party. Security was already having great difficulty controlling the mini-mob when a cry went up: "He's coming out!"

As the new WBC champion emerged from the celebration, he was immediately surrounded by well-wishers and media types. Mike squinted in the blinding glare of the television lights as a reporter shoved a microphone in his face. Two burly companions did their best to protect him from the crush of humanity, but it took a flying wedge of hotel security guards to guide him to safety.

At this juncture, there doesn't seem to be a heavyweight around capable of defeating Tyson in the ring. But from now on, fighting will probably be the easiest part of Mike's life. Fame has ruined more than one fighter. Some cynics, desperate for a pessimistic angle, hint it might be Tyson's downfall. But Mike certainly doesn't think so.

"I'm the youngest heavyweight champion and I'm going to be the oldest," said Tyson.

ADDENDUM: Tubbs fell out of his scheduled match with Witherspoon, and substitute James "Bonecrusher" Smith knockout out Witherspoon in the first round to claim the WBA belt. Tyson then fought Smith on March 7, 1987, winning a unanimous 12-round decision. Except for Witherspoon, whom he never fought, Tyson would defeat all of the other possible opponents mentioned in the article: Thomas (KO 6), Biggs (KO 7), Tubbs (KO 2), Spinks (KO 1). ■

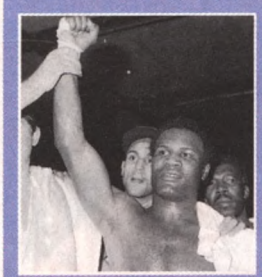
THE RING, March 1987

***The Cover*:** Mike Tyson's devastating punching power had boxing people uttering his name in the same breath with historical heavyweight champions like Jack Dempsey and Joe Louis. Hardly anyone expected Trevor Berbick to beat "Iron Mike," but no one expected Tyson to take out Berbick in two rounds.

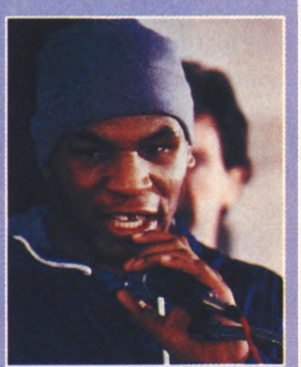
***The Unknown Champions*:** THE RING ran a brief series featuring some of the unknown titlists of the mid-1980s. This issue featured IBF cruiserweight titlist Rickey Parkey, who hailed from Morristown, Tennessee. Parkey was introduced to boxing when he accompanied Frankie Randall to a local gym. Despite just 11 amateur fights, Parkey grabbed the IBF cruiserweight strap by knocking Lee Roy Murphy in his fifth year as a pro.

***Pugstyle*:** In individual sports, such as boxing, athletes are often identified by the certain way they dress. Boxers, possibly above all other athletes, are clothes hounds. Fighters often like to make fashion statements both in and out of the ring. Muhammad Ali laughed at George Foreman's clothes, but it was considered hip for that era.

***Next Up, Hearns*:** WBC light heavyweight titlist Dennis Andries was hoping to somehow connect with the British boxing public. Andries never received anything close to the recognition England's boxing establishment paid to heavyweight Frank Bruno, which prompted Andries to say, "In England, they like losers more than winners. I don't kiss their backsides." A victory over Hearns, Andries thought, would enable him to gain fan appeal.



***Fighter Of The Month*:** The easy choice was Mike Tyson. Was there any doubt? All Iron Mike did was snare the WBC belt by destroying Trevor Berbick in two rounds. Tyson became the youngest fighter to win a segment of the heavyweight title and left sports fans with the indelible highlight reel image of Berbick trying to regain his balance after Tyson knocked him down for the second time.



THE FIGHT DOCTOR

AN UPDATE ON ANABOLIC STEROIDS IN BOXING

By Margaret Goodman, MD

In the May 2003 issue of THE RING EXTRA, I discussed anabolic steroids. Since then, we've learned that more and more athletes are taking advantage of anabolic steroid accessibility, limited drug testing, and access to costly steroid gurus that lessen the chances of getting caught. Yes, performance enhancing substances and anabolic steroid use is on the rise. What is boxing doing about it? Sadly, for the most part, we are ignoring the problem and any solutions.

Performance enhancement is as old as competitive sport itself, and actually has its root in warfare. The Dutch work *"dop"* originated from the name of a grape skin alcoholic beverage used by Zulu warriors to give them an edge in battle. Ancient gladiators used Strychnine, a nervous system stimulant and deadly toxin, to help them face one another in the Colosseum. Eleventh-century Vikings used a potion made of hallucinogenic mushrooms before facing their opponents.

Strychnine in combination with alcohol, heroin, caffeine, and cocaine continued to be used throughout the early-1900s despite the occasional death, until development of amphetamines in the 1930s. In the 1950s, the Soviet Olympic team utilized male hormones to increase power and strength. Americans countered by developing anabolic steroids.

There was no regulation of performance enhancement substance until Danish Olympian Kurt Jensen died from an amphetamine overdose. Facing great pressure, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) did a study in 1963, but still no definition of doping was developed. In 1968, following the death of Tour de France cyclist Tommy Simpson from amphetamines, the IOC defined *doping*, developed a banned substance list, and began testing. However, it wasn't until 1988, when Olympic sprinter Ben Johnson was stripped of his gold medal after testing positive for anabolic steroids, that media attention began to focus on the issue.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

James Toney was fined and suspended for testing positive for Nandrolone after his bout with John Ruiz

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was established in 1999 in an effort to develop universal anti-doping standards. This has been perhaps the most important step to date in strengthening athlete and public confidence in drug-free sports. Their testing procedures and prohibited substance lists are used by countless international athletic organizations, including the IOC.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) estimates that more than one-half million children between 8th and 10th grades use anabolic steroids. Furthermore, in 2001, the Center for Disease Control indicated that five percent of high school students had used steroids by their senior year, and 0.5 percent of all

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Castillo and Corrales needed more rest before fighting a rematch

American adults have admitted to having used steroids. Males used to comprise over 90 percent of the steroid users, but now that figure has dropped to 50 percent.

In 1990, the Anabolic Steroid Control Act became law, making it difficult for a physician to prescribe anabolics by listing them as a Schedule III drug (such as heroin and cocaine). The Anabolic Steroids Act of 2004 modified the definition of anabolic steroids to include THG (tetrahydrogestrinone), the drug involved in the BALCO investigation, androstenedione (Andro), and countless other related chemicals.

Possession or sale of anabolic steroids without a valid prescription is illegal. Trafficking results in a five-year prison term and $250,000 fine for the first offense. Possession conviction can result in a one-year prison sentence and minimum of $1,000 fine. Individual states have also passed penalties and fines. They are commonly smuggled from foreign countries where no prescription is required, but the easiest place to obtain these drugs is the Internet, which it is difficult to police.

Anabolic steroids are synthetically produced variants of testosterone. They have anabolic (muscle building) and androgenic (promoting masculine) characteristics. Doctors occasionally prescribe steroids for loss of testicular function, breast cancer, or delayed puberty. Veterinarians administer them to animals to promote feed efficiency, improve weight gain, and anemia.

Athletes use anywhere from five to 100 times the normal doses, often combining and alternating various types. They can significantly reduce recovery time and therefore aid in increasing endurance, muscle size, strength, and reduce body fat.

Whether an athlete or not, the side effects include irreversible harm to the liver, male and female reproductive system, growth in children, the cardiovascular system leading to stroke, heart attack or heart failure, mental illness, hair loss, and can contribute to hepatitis and HIV from needle sharing.

Steroid detection depends on the type used. The oral version of stanazol (Winstrol) stays in the system for only three weeks after usage is stopped, while the injectable version remains two to five months. Nandrolone (Deca-Durobolin), the drug James Toney tested positive for, can be detected up to 12 to 15 months.

Steroid alternatives have become almost as abused as steroids themselves. Clomid, a female fertility drug, prevents gynecomastia (breast development) and stimulates testosterone. It assists in preventing a steroid "crash" when users come off anabolics. Clenbutrerol (Spirovent) is used by some instead of steroids because it is thought to burn body fat and believed to have anabolic properties. Still, Growth Hormone remains the most popular. It has a strong anabolic effect in causing muscle growth and an increase muscle cell number. It has to be used in combination with anabolic steroids, insulin, or thyroid hormones to be effective, and can cost up to $2,000 a month. Each of these drugs can have serious side effects in addition to giving the user an unfair advantage.

Since 2002, 10 athletes in Nevada have tested positive for anabolic steroids. Although the numbers sound low, it certainly doesn't mean our methods of testing have been a significant deterrent or that usage has dropped. It is much more likely we are missing many athletes that would have otherwise been caught through no-notice testing. Steroid use can be curbed through education, regular testing by all commissions, tough penalties, and an understanding that these drugs are a part of our sport. Only then will we begin to level the playing field, improve fighter safety, and improve credibility.

***

TOO MUCH, TOO SOON: What do Vernon Forrest, Roy Jones, and Diego Corrales have in common? They are each outstanding fighters, but more significantly, they came back much too soon after very tough fights.

A lot of us understand that the amount of punishment absorbed by Diego Corrales and Jose Luis Castillo, just five months before their rematch, would affect one if not both competitors. Nevertheless, we applauded their bravery and willingness to face one another again in our selfish desire to witness another great fight, while ignoring the repercussions of what each man had endured.

Nobody knows exactly how long it takes the brain to heal after such devastating punches, and even less is known about how many punches a fighter's head can absorb before irreparable harm is done. What we do know is that the brain takes considerably longer to repair itself than the visible cuts and bruises.

It is the responsibility of commission, promoters, managers, and networks to understand the magic of rest, so that if a third fight between Castillo and Corrales is to happen, it will be a masterpiece to witness instead of a blueprint for an unhealthy retirement.

Perhaps we can all take a lesson from Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales, who waited approximately two years between each of their great fights. ■

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

WLAD PRO & CON

Wladimir Klitschko vs. Samuel Peter. What a fight! Twelve rounds of exciting entertainment. I was very impressed with Klitschko, who fought smart and moved around like a lightweight. He also proved he can take a hit on the chin and go the distance. I'm very proud to be a Klitschko fan. Welcome back, tall man.

D. DOYLE
Valley Mills, TX

I have just watched the Wladimir Klitschko-Sam Peter "fight," and it was the most awful thing I have seen in a while. HBO and Klitschko almost make me ashamed to be a boxing fan. Klitschko was the most scared fighter I've ever seen in the ring, and the HBO commentators praised him for it the whole fight. I understand a fighter holding when he's hurt and trying to recover his senses. But when a fighter holds for an entire fight because he is afraid of getting hurt, he should be penalized and then disqualified if the fouling persists. Why does HBO always make fun of John Ruiz for holding and making a boring fight, and then try to make us puke by praising another fighter for doing the same thing?

MATT FIELDS
Fayette, OH

UNWISE WORDS?

In the "TV Fights Of The Month" segment in the December 2005 RING EXTRA, the stoppage of the Oscar Larios-Wayne McCullough fight was criticized. In the light of what happened to Leavander Johnson, don't you guys feel a little foolish or maybe ashamed? Let's hope that Dr. Margaret Goodman was not influenced in her judgment by that reckless comment.

PASCAL BERENGUER
berenguerboxe@hotmail.com

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Samuel Peter and Wladimir Klitschko eye each other during their 12-round heavyweight bout in which Klistchko came off the floor three times to win a decision. Readers D. Doyle and Matt Fields had opposite reaction to what transpired in the bout and what it meant for each boxer.

BAER BUMMER

It was absolutely disgraceful the way legendary heavyweight champion Max Baer was bogusly portrayed as a mean-spirited killer in the movie *Cinderella Man*. Shame on director Ron Howard for attempting to fool the public into riding this baloney pony of a story. Wake up, Opey! Check the facts before you tarnish a legend. If not for the cruel distortion of Baer's character, the movie might have been as great as advertised. If I were Max Baer Jr., I'd slap a lawsuit on this false fight flick the same way Joey Giardello did when they tainted his decision victory over Rubin Cater in *The Hurricane*.

PETER GEORGE
Chicago, IL

[Editor's Note: Historian Pete Ehrmann sets the record straight on Max Baer in this issue. *See page 68.]*

WAITING GAME

How come Roberto Duran has not been put in the Hall of Fame? Even if he said "no mas" to Ray Leonard, that should not be the only thing everybody remembers. Duran was the world lightweight champion for almost eight years, beat Leonard in their first encounter, and gave Marvin Hagler a tougher time than Tommy Hearns did.

GLENN PAYNE
original_joker@yahoo.com

[Editor's note: A fighter has to wait until five years after his final bout before being considered for induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. Duran's last fight was on July 14, 2001.]

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Soon-to-be kayo victim Diego Corrales struggles to rise after being floored by a left hook from Jose Luis Castillo. Readers Amy Schulze and Steven Perez both enjoyed the fight—and didn't even mention the weigh-in controversy in their letters.

TRUE CHAMPS

After Tarver vs. Jones III was over, ESPN reported on its sports ticker at the bottom of the screen "Tarver defeats Jones and retains his RING magazine championship belt." Thank you, ESPN, for helping recognize THE RING belts and thank you to THE RING for bringing integrity and legitimacy back to the Sweet Science.

JIM NEWTON
Staten Island, New York

Just wanted to congratulate THE RING on its championship policy. Like a lot of fans, I turn to THE RING to identify boxing's true champions. Your system is fair and comprehensive. I only suggest you stop crowning boxers who unify the alphabet belts. If those titles are as meaningless as you say—and they are—then don't give them any weight whatsoever. By decreeing that a "unified" titlist is a champion, you really are saying that three wrongs make a right. Forget the alphabet boys. Go your own way.

PAUL MINNIS
pminnis@therepublic.com

[Editor's note: Mr. Minnis, we couldn't agree more. In fact, THE RING adjusted its championship policy in the manner you suggests in the Winter 2005 issue. Since then, the only way a championship vacancy can be filled is a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain circumstances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.]

FORGET THE HEAVYWEIGHTS

How about that Jose Luis Castillo! After engaging in such a brutal battle and being stopped by Diego Corrales just five months ago, and then to coming back to kayo his conqueror in the rematch is a testament to Castillo's true grit. So much talk and attention is given to the heavyweights, but I will watch the smaller fighters anytime. That is where the true warriors reside. Those who don't know about Castillo, Diego Corrales, Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, and Manny Pacquiao are missing the boat.

AMY SCHULZE
Byrnes Mill, MO

CORRALES CAUTION

It was good to see an un-weakened and rested Jose Luis Castillo do what he should of done in the first fight with Diego Corrales. I do not think Castillo will fight at 135 pounds again, as it is too much of a strain for his thirtysomething-year-old body. Moreover, another fight with Corrales will result in Diego getting hurt, and this great sport does not need any more tragedies.

STEVEN PEREZ
perez.steven@gmail.com

KHAN: THE NEXT CALZAGHE?

The recent article on Amir Khan ("The New Face Of British Boxing") in the December 2005 issue of THE RING EXTRA was interesting, but boxing fans must ask themselves if he will ever have a chance to meet his potential while under the promotional banner of Frank Warren. We all know how Warren has handled Ricky Hatton and Joe Calzaghe. Sure, Hatton proved his mettle against Kostya Tszyu, but the fight would have never happened had Tszyu not taken a calculated risk and fought in Hatton's hometown. Calzaghe is in his 30s and never had the defining fight of his career. Maybe Lacy will roll the dice and fight him in Europe, but it isn't a done deal with Calzaghe's recent hand injury (that he somehow magically predicted might happen before the fight).

Allow me to gaze into my crystal ball for a moment. I see a future RING magazine article headlined: "Warren Feels The Wrath Of Khan," about Amir being angry because Warren has not gotten him a significant fight.

JIM WAYLAND
Jim_Wayland@hotmail.com■

LOOKING AHEAD

By Joe Santoliquito

MORALES-PACQUIAO II: MORE AT STAKE THAN VICTORY

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Who wouldn't want to see Morales-Pacquiao again?

Heading into November, there was no argument about which fight was the best of 2005. The first **Diego Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo** classic, in May, stood head-and-shoulders above an outstanding group of runner-ups. But take the first Corrales-Castillo fight off the board, and you can make a strong argument that the **Erik Morales-Manny Pacquiao** brawl on March 19 should be Fight of the Year. Now Morales and Pacquiao have a chance to set a fresh standard in '06, when they meet again, on January 21, in the first major match of the new year.

The rematch will take place in Las Vegas and be televised by HBO Pay-Per-View. As of press time, the Thomas & Mack Center appeared to be the leading candidate to host the fight in a joint venture between Caesars Palace and Wynn Resort. The MGM Grand, the venue for the first Morales-Pacquiao fight, does have the right of first refusal.

Morales, 48-3 (34), beat Pacquiao, 40-3-2 (32), by a close but unanimous decision the first time, but no one could question the entertainment value they gave during 12 rounds of unrelenting action. Once again, the fan-friendly pair will be fighting at 130 pounds. Even though they are the sort of fighters who aim to please every time out and certainly don't need any sort of special motivation, there will be plenty at stake in the rematch beyond victory. In a very real sense, both are fighting for their futures.

Morales enters the bout having lost two of his last three fights, including the 12-round trouncing he endured against **Zahir Raheem** in September, during a disappointing foray into the 135-pound division. A Morales victory could mean either a move back up to 135 to avenge the Raheem loss or a fourth fight with **Marco Antonio Barrera**, who is currently ranked number one by THE RING at 130, for the junior lightweight world championship. Pacquiao is faced with a similar set of circumstances. A victory over Morales could mean a rematch against Barrera, whom Pac-Man stopped in 2003, with the world junior lightweight championship at stake, or a rubber match with Morales.

The possibilities are intriguing and basically put the 130-pound division on lockdown for the foreseeable future, as the triumvirate of Morales, Pacquiao, and Barrera punch each other over the next year to determine who is the best junior lightweight in the world.

Pacquiao is certainly viewing the rematch with Morales much differently than their original encounter. Aside from receiving a significantly larger purse, he'll also be going to training camp instead of working out at the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood. **Freddie Roach**, Pac-Man's trainer, thinks it's in his fighter's best interest to get away from the hustle and bustle of Los Angeles, where two million Filipinos make their home. Normally, when Pacquiao trains in L.A., he is swamped by Filipino well-wishers, which tends to be a huge distraction. This time, Team Pacquiao will train for six weeks in either Santa Barbara, California, or in Arizona.

We have one wish for this fight: Both men make weight and put on the same sensational display they did the first time, which would certainly put them one up on Castillo-Corrales II.

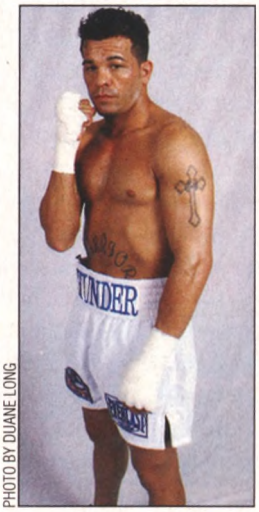


PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Gatti will return in January as a welterweight

LISTEN UP

On January 28, **Arturo Gatti** will return to the ring as a welterweight when he fights at the Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Gatti will be making his first start since his six-round beating at the hands of **Floyd Mayweather** in June, when he faces undefeated Danish southpaw **Thomas Damgaard**. The fight is scheduled to be shown on HBO … Seconds after **Castillo** stopped **Corrales** in the fourth round of their October 8 rematch, talk immediately sprang up about a third fight. One glaring problem: At what weight? Top Rank confirms that Castillo can no longer make the 135-pound lightweight limit, and that a catch-weight of 137 or 138 would be more prudent, providing both parties agree. Top Rank President **Todd du Boef** said that a spring date is possible … If **Barrera** doesn't get a rematch with either Morales or Pacquiao, look for him to challenge IBF beltholder **Jesus Chavez**. Barrera and Chavez are both promoted by Golden Boy, making a spring fight on HBO a good possibility. ■

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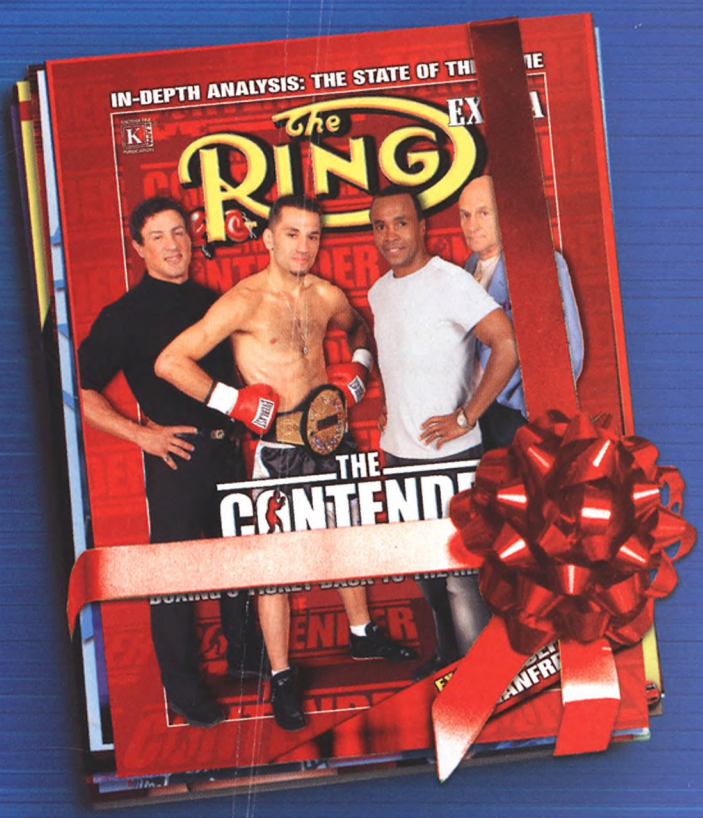

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